

BS"D



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From: crshulman@aol.com

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET  
ON NASO & SHAVUOS - 5765

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From: [sefira@torah.org](mailto:sefira@torah.org) Subject: Day 48 / 6 weeks and 6 days  
Tonight, the evening of Friday, June 13, will be day 48, which is 6 weeks and 6 days of the omer.

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From: TorahWeb.org [[torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org)] Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2005 9:39 PM To: [tw722@torahweb.org](mailto:tw722@torahweb.org) Subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Birchas Kohanim: L'bracha V'lo L'klala  
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RABBI MORDECHAI WILLIG

BIRCHAS KOHANIM: L'BRACHA V'LO L'KLALA

May Hashem bless you and guard you. May Hashem illuminate His countenance toward you and endow you with grace. May Hashem lift His countenance to you and establish peace for you. The blessing of the kohanim is called a bracha meshuleshes, a three part bracha. In reality there are six brachos. Why is it called meshuleshes and what is the logical progression of the three brachos?

The opening bracha provides for monetary success and protection from mazikin (Sifrei). These are not two separate brachos. Rather, the second half is a protection from the potential perils of the first half.

You increase silver and gold for yourselves and everything that you have will increase. And your heart will become haughty and you will forget Hashem (Devarim 8:13-14). This scenario describes the ruination of numerous individuals and communities in the history of Am Yisroel.

In our own time we have witnessed many decent, observant persons and/or families whose lives and/or marriages have been ruined by the temptations and trappings of great wealth. Torah observance and moral uprightness, which governed happy, wholesome homes of modest means, are too often discarded by the adoption of a lifestyle made possible by, and associated with, extraordinary financial success. These are indeed riches hoarded by their owner to his misfortune (Kohes 5:12).

These are the mazikin, the damaging side-effects of monetary blessing, which "v'yishmerecha" guards against. Hence, it is not a separate blessing, but rather a preserving of and protection from the potential perils of "yivorechecha."

The second bracha is the blessing of Torah. May he give you the light of Torah (Bamidbar Raba 11:13). As we say in "sim shalom": for with the light of Your countenance You gave is the Torah of life. The blessing of Torah and of spiritual greatness is critical to the very essence of a Jew. Yet even this bracha requires protection.

"And you shall love Hashem your G-d, that the name of Hashem become beloved through you. One should read, learn, and serve Torah scholars, and his dealings with people should be in a pleasant manner. What do people say about him? Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah.

Fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah. Woe unto people who do not learn Torah. The person who learned Torah, see how pleasant are his ways, how refined are his deeds. But one who reads, learns, and serves Torah scholars, and his business transactions are not conducted faithfully, and whose manner of speaking with people is not pleasant, what do people say about him? Woe unto that person who learned Torah. Woe unto his father who taught him Torah. Woe unto his teacher who taught him Torah. This person who learned Torah, see how perverse are his deeds, and how ugly are his ways (Yoma 86a). This is the terrible sin of chilul Hashem (Rashi)."

One who is blessed with the privilege to learn Torah can cause a great kiddush Hashem or the opposite. An ignorant Jew who is dishonest or impolite causes a small chilul Hashem. A talmid chacham who is dishonest or impolite causes a much greater chilul Hashem. In that case, his very learning is not a blessing but a curse. Therefore, after the kohein gives the bracha of Torah, he hastens to add "viyechunecha", may He endow you with grace, namely in the eyes of people.

Popularity is not necessarily good. But in this context, it allows the bracha of Torah to cause kiddush Hashem. Hence, it is not a separate blessing, but rather an extension of, and a protection from the potentially disastrous chilul Hashem consequence of the bracha of Torah.

The angels said before Hashem, it is written about You, "Who does not show favor - lo yisa panim" (Devarim 10:17), then how do you show favor to Israel ("yisa Hashem panav ailecha")? Hashem answered, and shall I not show favor to Israel? For I require birchas hamazon only if they eat and are satiated. Yet they are stringent and say birchas hamazon even for a kezayis (Berachos 20b).

This stringency is different than other rabbinic enactments. It refers to one who is so poor that he only has one kezayis to eat (Tanchuma Naso 10). Yet he favors Hashem. Not only does he not complain, but he even recites birkas hamazon. Since he favors Hashem, Hashem, favors him in return (Rav Eliyahu Gutmacher 20b).

Thus, the last of the three brachos blesses a poor person who is meticulously observant. Presumably the bracha is wealth to go along with Torah. This is the progression of the three blessings: wealth, Torah, and a combination of both.

Yet even this great bracha of material and spiritual wealth can have a downside. A rich man enjoys wealth, and a scholar enjoys Torah. One who has both blessings is often beset with inner conflict. Should he focus on learning or on financial matters? Sometimes this conflict precludes appreciation and enjoyment of either of the brachos. Therefore the kohein adds "may He establish peace for you". This does not mean a peace with other nations or other Jews. Rather, it means an inner peace which enables a recipient of spiritual and physical blessings to enjoy both. Hence it is not a separate bracha, but a protection against the conflict which can arise from the combination which is the first half of this bracha.

In sum, there are only three brachos in ascending order, and each can turn into a curse. The second part of each of the three brachos is meant to guard against the potential negatives of the first half. It is not a separate bracha but a means to preserve the blessing of the preceding phrase.

The words of birchas kohanim are part of our daily communal tefila. Let us internalize the critical lessons of these blessings so that we be worthy of receiving them.

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From: Rabbi Goldwicht [[rgoldwicht@yutorah.org](mailto:rgoldwicht@yutorah.org)] Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2005 11:25 AM  
Subject: The Weekly Sichah - Parashat Naso/Shavuot  
RAV MEIR GOLDWICHT

## Parashat Naso

With 176 pesukim, parashat Naso is the longest parasha in the Torah. Although the parasha deals with many different topics, Chazal attempt to find the keshet that exists between each of them. For example, in our parasha the Torah deals with the laws of the nazir. The parasha immediately preceding the parasha of the nazir is that of the sotah. Rashi explains that the reason behind the juxtaposition of these two parshiot is that one who sees the sotah b'kilkulah (in her undoing) will swear to abstain from wine. A bit later in the parasha the Torah deals with the korbanot of the nesi'im, followed by the parasha of lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan at the beginning of parashat Beha'alotcha. Here, too, there is a thematic keshet between these two topics, leading to their juxtaposition, as Rash i points out: since Aharon was upset because he and his shevet did not get to participate in the chanukat hamizbeach, HaKadosh Baruch Hu told him, "Your portion is greater than theirs, since you light and clean the neiroi."

Immediately after the parasha of the nazir, the Torah instructs the kohanim how to bless the nation, birkat kohanim. Here, too, Chazal point out a keshet, although it is a halachic keshet rather than a thematic keshet: Just as a nazir is forbidden to drink wine, so a kohen may not drink wine at the time of his avodah. This leads us to ask our first question: There is a halachic keshet between parashat nazir and parashat birkat kohanim; is there no thematic keshet between these two parshiot as well?

Our second question: At the termination of his nezirut, the nazir must bring a korban chatat, among other korbanot. This korban atones for the sin he committed "al hanefesh" (BaMidbar 6:11). The Ramban asks: What sin did the nazir commit that requires him to bring a korban chatat? He explains that it is his return to normal life, which naturally contains a higher level of tumah than his life of abstention as a nazir, that obligates a korban chatat. Rabbeinu Bechayei, an 11th-century rishon, challenges the Ramban's explanation, pointing out that nowhere do we find that a person must bring a korban chatat before he actually sins; entering a situation more conducive to tumah cannot be enough to obligate the nazir to bring a korban chatat. Why, then, must the nazir bring a korban chatat?

The haftarah of parashat Naso deals with nezirut Shimshon. We have a principle that the haftarah is always related to the parasha, with the exception of the special haftarot, such as the sheva d'nechemta. Our third and final question, then, is: How does the haftarah of nezirut Shimshon relate to the parasha? After all, nezirut Shimshon is not even directly comparable to the nezirut of our parasha, as there are halachic differences between the two types of nezirut!

Rather, when we read in the navi the entire story of Shimshon haGibbor, of his tremendous might and his colossal downfall, it is clear that the navi wishes to teach us that there is no gevurah without kedushah. The moment the gevurah is no longer attached to kedushah, it vanishes. Therefore, when a person ascends to the Beit HaMikdash and witnesses a sotah b'kilkulah, drinking the water in which the Name of Hashem was erased, her stomach blowing up and the kohanim rushing her out of the Mikdash as she suffers a horrible and painful death, he has witnessed a clear instance of a sin and its punishment. This inspires him to accept upon himself extra kedushah and yirat shamayim.

Seemingly, this is a good thing. However, when it comes time for the nazir to end his nezirut, it becomes clear that the kedushah he originally accepted upon himself was one that isolated him from the tzibbur. In other words, this is a nazir b'kilkulo. When a person accepts additional kedushah upon himself, that kedushah must strengthen his connection to the tzibbur, not weaken it. This is the kilkul for which the nazir must bring a korban chatat.

Perhaps this is the thematic keshet between the parasha of the nazir and that of birkat kohanim. One who sees a nazir terminating his nezirut is witnessing a nazir b'kilkulo; the tikkun for this is birkat kohanim,

through which the kohen uses his unique kedushah not to isolate himself from the tzibbur, but to contribute to the tzibbur. Although his blessing of the tzibbur is because Hashem commanded him to do so, he does it with love and affection, sharing his kedushah with the entire tzibbur.

As we stand at the foot of Har Sinai, so close to Kabbalat haTorah, we must remember that the Torah is given to us, human beings, in order to create the proper balance in life, infusing every aspect of the Creation and every one of our actions with kedushah. Once we accomplish this we will truly be a mamlechet kohanim v'goy kadosh – a goy on the one hand, leading a normal life, but also kadosh, infusing normal life with kedushah.

Today, more than ever, we see that gevurah cannot exist without kedushah. We must pray for gevurah on this Shavuot, haba aleinu l'tovah, and accept upon ourselves the yoke of Torah with the pleasantness of Torah, in a way that it connects to every aspect of our lives. As it says in the Yerushalmi, "Kol hamekabel ol torah mochalim lo al kol avonotav, All who accept the yoke of Torah upon themselves are forgiven for all their sins." Shabbat Shalom and Chag Shavuot Sameach! Meir Goldwicht

We would be delighted to hear your thoughts and suggestions at talliskattan@sbcglobal.net . Weekly Insights on the Parsha and Moadim by Rabbi Meir Goldwicht is a service of YUTorah, the online source of the Torah of Yeshiva University. Get more parsha shiurim and thousands of other shiurim, by visiting [www.yutorah.org](http://www.yutorah.org). To unsubscribe from this list, please click here.

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From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, June 06, 2005 1:56 PM Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview- The Minhag of Eating Dairy Products on Shavuot  
THE MINHAG OF EATING DAIRY PRODUCTS ON SHAVUOT  
RABBI JOSH FLUG

There is longstanding minhag to eat dairy products on Shavuot in lieu of the traditional meat meals that are eaten on other festivals. This article will explore the various reasons for this tradition and the halachic underpinnings of each reason. It will also cover the practical differences between each reason.

### The Availability of Meat After Matan Torah

Perhaps the most famous reason for eating dairy products is the reason given by Mishna Berurah 494:12. Mishna Berurah suggests that at the time of Matan Torah, the receiving of the Torah, the Jewish people became obligated in all of the mitzvot of the Torah. As such, in order to eat meat, they would have had to follow the complex procedure involved in producing kosher meat. Because this procedure required time in order to properly prepare the meat, the only food items available immediately after Matan Torah were dairy products. The tradition of eating dairy products on Shavuot serves to commemorate the Matan Torah experience when the Jewish people were only able to eat dairy products.

R. Shalom B. Felman, Shalmei Todah, no. 2, notes that there is dispute recorded in the Gemara, Shabbat 87a, as to whether Matan Torah occurred on Shabbat. The reason given by Mishna Berurah follows the opinion that Matan Torah did not occur on Shabbat. The commandment to keep Shabbat preceded Matan Torah (see Shabbat 87b). Regardless of whether or not it was difficult to prepare kosher meat after Matan Torah, the Jewish people would not have been able to prepare meat on Shabbat. Therefore, according to the opinion that Matan Torah occurred on Shabbat, and the commandment to keep Shabbat was already in effect, the lack of ability to eat meat would be attributed to Shabbat and not to Matan Torah. One must then find a different reason for eating dairy products on Shavuot

### A Remembrance of the Shte HaLechem

Rama, Orach Chaim 494:2 suggests that the minhag of eating dairy products on Shavuot serves as a remembrance of the shte

halechem (two bread) offering that was brought on Shavuot during the times of the Beit HaMikdash. Rama suggests that the minhag of eating dairy products does not replace the traditional meat meal eaten on Yom Tov. Rather, one starts the meal eating dairy products, and mid-way through the meal, one removes the dairy products, and replaces them with meat products. Upon replacing the dairy products with the meat products, one is required to remove the bread eaten during the dairy portion of the meal, and replace it with bread that was not used with a dairy meal (See Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 89:4). By using two separate sets of bread, one commemorates the shte halechem offering.

This reason presumes that there is an actual requirement to remove the bread that was eaten with the dairy products and replace it with bread suitable to eat with meat. However, R. Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Yoreh Deah 1:38, notes that the prohibition to eat a meat meal with bread that was eaten with dairy products only applies to the smaller pieces of bread that might have come into contact with dairy products. The loaf of bread on the table may be used during the meat meal. If so, there is no need for two separate sets of bread. Nevertheless, R. Feinstein admits that although there is no obligation to remove the bread eaten with the dairy meal, it is certainly praiseworthy. Perhaps R. Feinstein understands that if one removes the bread eaten with the dairy meal as a matter of added stringency, this also constitutes a commemoration of the shte halechem offering.

#### The First Opportunity to Eat Dairy Products

R. Moshe Shternbuch, Moadim U'Zemanim 8:319, presents a novel approach toward the minhag to eat dairy products on Shavuot. The Gemara, Bechorot 6b, questions why consuming milk products does not constitute a violation of ever min hachai, eating from a live animal. The Gemara states that the permissibility of milk is derived from the verse (Shemot 3:8) that refers to the land of Israel as eretz zavat chalav udevash, a land flowing with milk and honey. If milk was actually prohibited, the Torah would not have praised Israel with such an accolade. R. Shternbuch suggests that the permissibility derived from this verse did not go into effect until Matan Torah. Prior to Matan Torah, consuming milk products constituted a violation of ever min hachai, which is prohibited even for non-Jews. Therefore, after Matan Torah the Jewish people had their first opportunity to consume milk products. Since milk products were novel to the Jewish people, they likely ate mostly milk products in the ensuing days. To commemorate this unique event, the minhag developed that dairy products are eaten on Shavuot. R. Shternbuch admits that there is a problem with this interpretation. Shita Mekubetzet, ad loc., questions the Gemara's choice of the source that milk is permitted. He suggests that one can derive that milk is permitted from Avraham Avinu. The verse (Bereishit 18:8) states that Avraham offered milk to his three visitors. If milk was actually prohibited, Avraham would not have offered it to them. Shita Mekubetzet explains that one cannot derive from Avraham that milk is permitted. When Avraham offered milk to his guests he did not know that they were angels. He thought they were non-Jews, and therefore offered them milk. Therefore, there is no proof from this event that milk is permitted to Jewish people. The Gemara must then prove the permissibility of milk from a different source; from eretz zavat chalav udevash. It is clear from Shita Mekubetzet's interpretation that there was never a question if milk is permitted for non-Jews. The only question is whether it is permitted to Jews. Therefore, it is illogical to assume that the Jewish people would have refrained from partaking of milk products prior to Matan Torah.

#### We Are Not Like the Angels

The event involving Avraham and the angels serves as an alternative source for the minhag of eating dairy products on Shavuot. The verse states that Avraham not only gave milk to the angels, he gave them meat as well. The Midrash, Midrash Tehillim ch.8, relates that when the Jewish people were receiving the Torah, the angels complained

that the Torah should not be given to mortal human beings who cannot possibly keep the Torah. The Almighty responded "was it not you who descended upon Avraham and ate milk and meat together?"

R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik of Brisk, Beit HaLevi, Parshat Yitro, explains that the angels didn't eat actual basar b'chalav (meat and milk cooked together). Rather, they weren't meticulous in the various laws of eating meat subsequent to eating dairy products. Therefore, on Shavuot, the minhag developed to eat dairy products followed by meat. By doing so with the proper meticulousness, we show that we are not like the angels, and we are indeed worthy of receiving the Torah.

#### Conclusion

Four approaches were presented to explain the basis for eating dairy products on Shavuot. Rama's approach, as well as Beit HaLevi's approach assume that the minhag entails eating dairy products followed by meat products. Mishna Berurah's approach as well as R. Shternbuch's approach do not necessarily assume that one should eat meat subsequent to the dairy products. The discrepancy is reflected in various family traditions. Some family traditions call for eating dairy products exclusively. Other family traditions insist on eating meat after eating dairy products. The different traditions are due to both varied interpretations of the minhag as well as the various positions on simchat Yom Tov (as discussed in last week's issue).

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EMES LIYAAKOV

Weekly Insights from MOREINU

HORAV YAAKOV KAMENETZKY zt"l

[Translated by Ephraim Weiss]

At the end of Parshas Bamidbar, we read about the duties of the various Levite families in the Mishkan. The parsha concludes with a discussion of the family of Kehas. The beginning of this week's parsha, Parshas Naso, continues with the jobs that the families of Gershon and Merari maintained in the Mishkan. The order in which the families are listed seems to be somewhat strange. Normally, the Torah honors the bechor by listing him first. However, here the family of Kehas is listed before that of Gershon, despite the fact that Gershon was older. The Midrash solves this problem by explaining that since Kehas was the family that was responsible for carrying the aron which contained the luchos, they were given precedence in the listing. The honor that we must accord to the Torah supercedes even the natural privileges that are awarded to the bechor.

HaRav Yaakov Kamenetzky, zt"l explains how the concept of kavod haTorah is crucial during the period of sefiras ha'omer in which we now find ourselves. The Midrash describes how Bnei Yisroel, upon leaving Mitzrayim immediately asked Moshe when they would receive the Torah that they had been promised. Moshe responded that in another fifty days, they would receive the Torah from Hashem. Bnei Yisroel spent the next fifty days in intense anticipation, counting down to the day that they would merit the gift of the Torah. In the zchus of Bnei Yisroel's eagerness to acquire the Torah, Hashem awarded us with the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah of sefiras ha'omer every year. This Midrash reveals the notion that the counting of the omer is an expression of our love and honor for the Torah.

This concept can be used to better understand the famous Gemara in Yevamos, which discusses the tragic story of the death of the twenty-four thousand talmidim of Rebbe Akiva. The Gemara relates that Rebbe Akiva had twenty-four thousand talmidim, throughout the length and breadth of Eretz Yisroel, all of whom died during the weeks between Pesach and Shavuos. The reason given for these terrible events is that they failed to show proper respect for one another. However, the Gemara relates that the way in which they died was the same punishment that is usually meted out to those who commit the sin of bitul torah. Based on our previous discussion, Rav Yaakov explains that the lack of mutual respect amongst Rebbe Akiva's talmidim, represented a lacking in proper kavod and ahava for the Torah. Had they achieved greater kavod haTorah, they would have recognized that they must respect their peers, the great talmidei chachamim who represented the Torah itself. Had they shown true ahavas haTorah, they would have run to hear even one word of Torah from each other. Because of the extremely high madreigah of limud haTorah they had reached, they were seen as lacking in these two areas, and were punished with the penalty that can be inflicted on one who fails to recognize the significance of the Torah.

As we approach the Yom Tov of Shavuos, let us strive to achieve proper kavod haTorah, ahavas haTorah, and ahavas Yisroel so that we may be zocheh to be truly deserving of kabolas haTorah on Shavuos.

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From: RabbiWein@jewishdestiny.com Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2005 8:49 AM  
Subject: Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns

Jerusalem Post June 10, 2005 SHAVUOT Shavuot is represented in the Torah as being the chag habikurim – the holiday of the first fruits. In the times of the Temple in Jerusalem, the bikurim offering was an annual event, an obligation placed on the Jewish farmer to bring the first of his crops to the altar in the Temple. There is an entire tractate in Mishna dealing with the ritual and laws of this event of bikurim. An integral part of the ceremony of the bikurim offering was the recitation of a parsha of the Torah, a parsha that appears in Dvarim, Ki Tavo. The parsha that is recited is a concise history of the Jewish people from the time of our patriarchs till the moment of the Jew's appearance at the Temple with his bikurim offering. The Jewish farmer, having worked and sweated his way through the vicissitudes of an always uncertain growing season and having finally successfully harvested his crop, is not only obligated to give thanks to G-d for His bounty but is also obligated to place the entire "natural" event of growing crops in the Land of Israel into an historical perspective. The Mishna teaches us that there are those who are mayvee v'eino korei – who bring the bikurim offering but do not recite the parsha of history. Though, halachically this restriction applies only to gerim – converts – and other special cases, there is a moral lesson involved here as well. And the lesson is that unless one appreciates one's place in the greater, broader, longer view of Jewish history and life, even if one brings offerings to G-d's altar, something is yet incomplete and unfulfilled. One has to aspire to be mayvee v'korei – to both bring one's offering to G-d and to read the parsha that will help give that offering proper meaning and validity.

Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving the Torah to Israel on Sinai over three millennia ago. If a Jew wishes that one's offerings and accomplishments in life should have some eternal meaning then the connection to Torah and Sinai must be plainly evident in one's behavior, actions and attitudes. This is the bond between bikurim and the commemoration of the revelation at Sinai, the twin poles that raise the banner of Shavuot. Without the acceptance and understanding of Torah, without the acknowledgment of the Godly revelation at Sinai, our accomplishments in life are at best only mayvee v'eino korei – an offering and sacrifice often made without proper perspective and understanding. Shavuot as chag matan torateinu - the holiday of the giving of our Torah to Israel – and as chag habikurim – the holiday of the offering of the first of our crops to the Temple – is therefore a whole unit. The two components of Shavuot – bikurim and Torah – complement each other and reinforce our faith and desire to do G-d's will here on earth. Our physical and life accomplishments are seen as our bikurim, our mayvee – our prime offerings of the best that we have to the service of G-d and man – and our loyalty to Torah is our korei – our recitation of the special Torah parsha that explains and gives meaning to our actions and behavior. So, Shavuot is seen as the fulfillment of this basic obligation of Jewish life, of behavior and analysis combined.

Shavuot is also called atzeret in Mishna and Talmud. In this sense, it represents the conclusion of the season and holiday of Pesach. It is therefore noteworthy that in the recitation of the Hagada on the Seder night of Pesach, the parsha of bikurim serves as one of the central themes of the Hagada. For Pesach is the epitome of the concept of mayvee v'korei – of observance of ritual and proper behavior patterns coupled with a deep sense of history and of Jewish connection to Sinai and its revelation. Therefore, the Hagada analyzes almost every word of the parsha of bikurim, fleshing out its meaning and placing it into proper context and understanding. In so doing, the Hagada unites the two holidays of Pesach and Shavuot into one time frame and spiritual unit. Judaism always advocates seeing all of its aspects of faith and ritual as a whole. The forest is as important as are the trees. The atzeret of Shavuot gives meaning to the holiday of Pesach just as the holiday of Pesach gives the necessary preamble and background for the holiday of Shavuot. May this holiday bring to us health, joy and spiritual meaning.

#### SHAVUOT MEMORIES

I was preparing myself for conducting part of the all-might learning session held on Shavuot night at my synagogue when I came across a book that contained descriptions of past Shavuot celebrations here in the Land and State of Israel. A great deal of the book was devoted to the new and innovative programs celebrating Shavuot that were all the rage in the kibbutzim and in much of the new Israeli society of the 1920's and 1930's. In that age Shavuot lost all meaning as chag matan torateinu – the holiday of the granting of the Torah to Israel on Sinai - and became an almost hedonistic rite of the celebration of Jewish agriculture – chag habikurim. Parades, dances, festooned donkeys and waving pretty girls in farm wagons, marches and bands all celebrated the feast of Shavuot and the triumph of the Jewish farmer, now unfettered by the shackles of the Diaspora and Jewish tradition. All of this was accompanied by a mocking attitude towards the old-fashioned Shavuot and a tough and dedicated spirit of the new age – of Marxism's triumph – that was to be ushered in together with the new fruits of the season. Bialik, Tchernikovsy and others wrote poetry about our new farmers and the pagan glory of the new celebrations. In fact, some of the noted writers and journalists of that time wrote that it was certain that May Day – the international holiday of workers and Marxism – would replace Shavuot – even the new purely chag habikurim Shavuot – eventually as the Jewish holiday of the late springtime. Ah, for the good old days of unreal Marxist naïveté and doctrinaire thinking! But the new and innovative Shavuot did not stand the test of time. Communism and Marxism collapsed in the detritus of failed economic planning and murderous dictatorial governments. The kibbutzim now are pretty much broke, both economically and socially. Israeli agriculture is currently almost wholly dependent on foreign laborers doing the work. There is no longer a May Day parade in most of the country and the red flags that were the banners of the brave new world are languishing in mothballs. The chag habikurim Shavuot parades and dances, the enactments of the joys of planting and harvesting, are all passé. The Socialists have turned capitalistic, those who sent the Jews to settle Gaza and the Land of Israel now force them to leave, the Zionists have become post-Zionists, the Israeli patriots have become intoxicated with the civil rights of the Palestinians who are out to destroy the Jewish state, and the archeologists and biblical scholars of the People of the Book are out to prove that there never really was a book. It is not that the "secular wagon" of the "new Jew" is empty. It is rather that the wagon has hit so many ruts in the road that, for lack of discipline and balance, it has completely overturned.

The Jewish value system, embodied in the Ten Commandments, which Shavuot truly commemorates, is the key to successful Jewish survival in this land. It has always been so in our history and it remains so today. I speak not so much of observance of ritual and Jewish law, which by the way I believe ultimately is the only way to preserve Jewish values in a Jewish society, as I do of having an understanding and appreciation of tradition, custom and proper behavior in Jewish life. The shamelessness and arrogance that infects our political system is anathema to the Jewish value system. The acceptance and approval of rudeness, intolerance, demonization of others, aggressiveness and ruthlessness in our society, as exhibited in social, economic and political behavior is deemed unacceptable in the Jewish value system. All of the ills that plague our society – domestic violence, crime and murders, substance abuse, corruption of leaders – are traceable to a loss of a value system that would and does inhibit such behavior. These societal ills cross all barriers and affect all groups in Israeli society, though the instance of these ills is statistically lower in religious Jewish society than in the secular section. One can see only the trees of ritual and not view the forest of values that underpins the ritual. Yet, somehow, our schools and homes must regain the ability to teach and train our children in our value system if we are to succeed in our task of building a truly Jewish society here in Israel. Why demand knowledge of the Bible on a bagrut examination if all of its values and tenets are deemed irrelevant and unnecessary in

the real world of our daily lives? Maybe the government and the teachers' unions should discuss this question as they wrangle about reforms in our broken school system. Maybe.

Shavuot – the old time worn but ever-fresh Shavuot, represents the Jewish value system. The system emphasizes loyalty and honesty, respect towards elders and our past, sanctity of time (some sort of public sensitivity towards the Sabbath day) and place (Jerusalem and the Temple Mount), and a commitment to try and create a harmonious – not conformist – society. Our Jewish value system does not allow for false gods and their utopian ruthlessness. It emphasizes our duties towards the stranger and the foreigner, for we ourselves have been in that position so many times since our first experience in Egypt. It looks to build a more just society, to raise the poor and to temper the rich, to teach the unlettered and humble the scholar, to exalt and save life and to unite Jewish society while preserving the right to be individually different one from another. Shavuot is more than cheesecake and an all-night Torah learning experience. It is rather the reliving of Sinai and its value system, its lofty goals and long road. Only in such a fashion can our Shavuot be memorable and meaningful for us and for future generations as well.

Weekly Parsha June 10, 2005 NASSO This week's parsha of Nasso is the longest parsha in the Torah. The parsha deals with varied subject matter and on the surface seems to lack a unity of narrative. All of the great commentators to the Torah have sought and found certain common threads in the parsha that somehow bind it together. One of those commonalities is the concept of faith and trust. The Levites were to be the public servants of the people of Israel, the administrators and workers in the Temple and the teachers of Israel. They were to be supported by the Jewish people so as to free them from the harsh necessity of making a living to support themselves and their families. The Levites, therefore, had to trust that the Jewish people would attend to their needs. On the other hand, the Jewish people had to trust that the Levites would fulfill their public service tasks with efficiency and propriety. Mutual trust is the basis for all government and organizations, whether they be commercial, social or religious. Corruption, venality, poor judgment, arrogance of power, all destroy the thread of trust that is necessary for a harmonious society to function.

The parsha discusses the circumstances of disloyalty between spouses in a marriage. Nowhere in life is absolute trust as necessary as it is in marriage. The betrayal of infidelity destroys the bond of the marriage relationship. It is therefore most fitting that the woman – the sotah – described in the parsha recites the word "amen" twice in her oath of professed innocence. The word "amen" is a word of affirmation, faith and of trust. Moshe complains about the Jewish people that they "are children whom I cannot trust." The woman suspected of infidelity seeks restoration of trust. The "amen" is therefore repeated twice as part of this trust-building process. It is meant to emphasize her true sense of loyalty and rectitude. Without this added emphasis and declaration, it is unlikely that the thread of trust can be repaired in that family. Woe to the couple that distrusts each other and woe to the person who allows one's self to be involved in a compromising situation that will certainly breed mistrust and suspicion.

Trusting one's self too much is a dangerous trait. The parsha discusses the nazir – the person who takes a vow of abstinence in order to attempt to improve one's spiritual level. Ordinarily, Jewish tradition opposes the taking of vows of abstinence and the Talmud records for us the strong disapproval of the High Priest, Shimon Hatzadik towards the taking of the vows of nezirut. Yet, Shimon Hatzadik agreed that in the face of overwhelming temptation, when there is no certain trust left within the person in one's ability to overcome that temptation, that vows of nezirut are in order. We are warned never to trust ourselves fully. Self-trust and confidence are necessary traits for successful living. But complete and implicit trust in one's judgment, borders on arrogance. The thread of self-trust is very delicate. We should not break it nor should we feel that it is strong enough to carry us through all situations in life. Nezirut reminds us of the caution necessary in dealing with our own selves and our self-trust.

Shabat shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein More articles on [www.RabbiWein.com](http://www.RabbiWein.com)  
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From: "The Untermans" <usa05@hotmail.com>  
Reflections on Yom Yerushalayim - having been there  
Jeremiah Unterman

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During 1966-67, when I was 20, I spent my junior year abroad at Hebrew University, which of course was on the Givat Ram campus – Mt. Scopus being a closed off enclave surrounded totally by Jordan. An impenetrable wall separated East Jerusalem from West. There were very few spots from which you could even see the walls of the Old City, and of course you couldn't see the Kotel. At this time, the Jewish population of Israel barely exceeded two million.

From January on, the Syrians on the Golan Heights increased their shelling of the farmers and kibbutzim in the valley below. There used to be a Hebrew idiom to describe it – "Syrian rainfall". Tensions were exacerbated around mid-April when in a pitched battle over the Kineret, Israel downed 7 Syrian Mig-21s. By May, Nasser had moved tens of thousands of troops into the Sinai. Syria and Egypt had a military pact. On May 15, the 19th Yom Haatzmaut was celebrated, with, among other things, the Israel song festival at Binyanei Hauma in Jerusalem. To entertain the audience after the main part of the competition, while the votes were being tabulated, Teddy Kollek had asked a number of songwriters to write songs of Yerushalayim. The only songwriter to send in a song was Naomi Shemer. She had heard 18-year old soldier Shuli Natan sing, and she insisted that this amateur be the one to sing her new song. So this wisp of a girl came out with a single guitar, sang Yerushalayim Shel Zahav, and captured the heart of a people. At the end of the evening, Kollek asked Natan to sing it again, and the entire audience joined in on the refrain. It took the country by wildfire and was constantly on the radio. It was on everyone's lips – secular and religious.

It should be noted that, from the 1948 War for Independence until then, no significant songs of Yerushalayim had been written. What prompted Teddy Kollek to suggest this? Why was Naomi Shemer the only one to respond? And think of the song – "Im eshkech Yerushalayim" – it was a song of longing, like Tehillim Kuf Lamed Zayin, even though the State of Israel existed, without Yerushalayim, without Ha'ir Ha'atika, it was like we were in Bavel, living in galut. It was a kina. It stirred the depths of feeling of the people, and what for? Why was the whole nation, secular and religious, suddenly chanting this poem of yearning for a city lost? Who could understand it? Who knew then that Jordan would yet sign on with Syria and Egypt, and would, two weeks later, put its army under the authority of an Egyptian general? Was the people's singing a cry that would reach Heaven?

The next day, May 16, Nasser asked the UN to leave the border between Israel and Egypt. They fled. The Straits of Tiran were blockaded and Israel could no longer get oil from Iran. Israel began to call up its reserves in earnest. On the radio you hear codes, "Blue parakeet" "Red diamond", and twenty more guys are gone from the dorms. In those days, the 137 American students on the one-year program each had an Israeli roommate (there were also 17 European students on the WUJS program – World Union of Jewish Students). My roommate, Yossi Shmuel, a law student from Beersheba, a biryon, is going nuts, "Why haven't they called me?" At one am one night there was a loud knocking on my dorm room door. My roommate opens the door. It's a messenger from his unit, he says two words, "Yossi, bo". Yossi gets dressed, turns to me, and says, "Well, Jerry, I'm off to war. Aren't you going to say good-bye?" I'm in shock. I mumble something, and he's gone.

By May 23 the country was mobilized. Hebrew University was a ghost campus. Only Arabs, handicapped students, foreign students, and a few able-bodied sole-surviving Israelis are left – maybe three hundred students. The foreign students hear that some kibbutzim near Gaza need help with emergency preparations and bringing in the harvest. A bunch of us go to Negba, one of the kibbutzim which slowed down the Egyptian advance to Tel-Aviv in 1948 just enough for the Israeli army to hold and counter-attack. For 10 days I fill sandbags with sand and put them next to shelters. I never did anything so important in my life. It was something that had to be done, and if I didn't do it, it wouldn't get done. I didn't get nervous until one day some of the older men (all the younger ones were in the army) take us out to a shooting range and teach us how to shoot, using old Czechoslovakian bolt-action rifles left over from the War for Independence. I figure this is not a good sign.

On Wednesday, May 31, all the foreign students return to Hebrew University. The University administration wants to speak with us. Our parents are frantically trying to get us to come home. We refuse. Our roommates are in the army and we're going to run back to the States? Not a chance. (One British girl was taken bodily and put on a plane by two guys from the British Embassy. She returned the day after the war, after having cried and not slept during the whole time of the war) A university vice-president assures us that no war will start in Jerusalem. We'll be safe there. One of my friends asks him, "Yeah, but we're the goodies and they're the baddies. What happens if they surprise us and start a war in Jerusalem". The VP answers, "Don't worry, we'll bus you to Haifa and get you out on the first boat". Right. We're still waiting for that bus.

I decide to hang around through Shabbat. You can cut the tension in Yerushalayim with a knife. Everybody is worried. And yet, people are wonderful to each other.

The buses have stopped running, because the buses have been drafted as troop carriers. Even many private cars are drafted. Those who have cars stop to pick up anybody who is hitchhiking and they drive people wherever they need to go. People go out of their way to help each other, no matter what their level of observance. Am echad belev echad. But why do we need a deadly crisis to be nice to each other? Why can't all Jews be friends to all other Jews every day?

On Thursday, June 1, Israel declares a National Unity Government. Moshe Dayan is made Minister of Defense. We feel encouraged. The real hero, of course, will be Chief of Staff Yitzchak Rabin who was responsible for the preparedness of Tzahal. We don't realize that there is another tension in the air, not the tension of worry, but the tension of the archer who draws back the bow to full extension and is about to release the arrow.

Motzaei Shabbat, June 3: Many soldiers are on leave for Shabbat. We get a visit from one of our Israeli friends in the paratroopers. He tells us, "Leave! Go home, now! The war is coming. Who knows who will survive. There will be tremendous loss of life. It will be horrible." We go to bed terribly disconcerted. We hear that Israel has half the jets and less than half the tanks arrayed against us.

Sunday, June 4: We are about to go back to the kibbutzim, when I see another Israeli friend, Ilana Harman. She was a first year university student who wasn't in the army because she was only 17. Her father is Avraham Harman, Israel's ambassador to the US. She tells us, "Great news! My parents just left to go back to the States, and they told me that there won't be a war!" Fantastic, we think. I decide to go back to Negba, pick up my stuff which I had left there, and come back to Yerushalayim to study for my exams – which will soon take place since there won't be a war. We only found out later that the Harmans knew the exact moment that the war would start and that they were rushing back to the States to be there by the time it started. Yet, they didn't tell their daughter lest there was the slightest chance she might tell someone else and word would get out to the wrong person. Loose lips sink ships. So, if she was in harm's way that's just a risk that her parents had to take.

But what do I know? There won't be a war. I hitch back to Negba, and the next morning I get up before dawn and begin hitching back to Yerushalayim. In the truck taking me the radio tells us that the Egyptians have shelled 13 villages near Gaza. The driver says, "it's beginning." I, of course, know better. I arrive back at the Hebrew University dorms by 8:30am, Monday, June 5, khof vav belyar. I'm standing outside talking with an American friend around 9:30, when, all hell breaks loose. Jordanian shells begin exploding all around us. My initial reaction is, "What are you shooting at me for?" We're standing there – gawking – when an Israeli runs by us yelling, "Get into a shelter, you stupid Americans. There's a war on!"

So we get into the shelters, except that there is a problem – no one expects a war in Jerusalem, so the shelters are unprepared – there's no mattresses, no blankets, no food, no water, nothing. Even the army hadn't expected a war there. Eshkol had informed Hussein that Israel had no intentions of attacking Jordan. A few hours later, one brigade of paratrooper reservists, who are preparing to jump down in Sinai, are sent to Yerushalayim. On the spot, they have to make battle plans to counter-attack. Later, Israeli armor will come down from the north, and the Jerusalem Brigade from the south.

In the meantime, we get hold of master keys to the dorm rooms, and during lulls in the shelling, a few of us run around grabbing mattresses, blankets, pillows, etc., and carrying them into the shelters. During one such lull in the afternoon, maybe I see a miracle. Three of us are outside carrying stuff to one of the shelters when suddenly we hear a shell coming – by the way, not a high pitched whine, but more like a low whirr. Obviously, we begin running. I dive through the shelter door. My friend Billy dives through the shelter door. But Chet is still out there. We know he's not going to make it. I yell out, "Hit the ground, Chet, hit the ground." He hits the ground and the shell explodes – it looks like right on top of him. Oh, no, we think. The smoke clears, and ... he gets up and runs into the shelter – white as a sheet – and collapses – not a scratch on him. What had happened was that when the dormitories had been built, to make it more attractive, huge natural boulders were put in various spots on the grounds. Chet had fallen on one side of a boulder and the shell had hit not more than 10 feet away, but on the other side of the boulder... Maybe a miracle.

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It was now Wednesday morning, June 7, chof chet belyar: I go to civil defense HQ. I am with about 10 other people there. By this time, we know of the incredible victory of Israel's air force, and we know of the success in Sinai and that Tzahal has begun to have in the West Bank. It is around 11:30 in the morning, and Kol Yisrael was reporting that Tzahal was surrounding the Old City - after the bloody battle for Givat Hatachmoshet. To say that we are excited with the possibility of what was about to happen is a gross understatement. We are glued to the radio. Suddenly, we hear Na lehamtin lehodaah chashuvah – stay tuned for an important

announcement, and then, nothing... static...silence – it seemed to go on for about ten minutes, although I couldn't swear to it. None of us dare to talk. Finally, a voice, "Shir hamaalot leDavid, samachti ..." A Song of Ascents; of David. I rejoiced when they said unto me: 'Let us go unto the house of HaShem.' Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem; Jerusalem, that art builded as a city that is compact together; Whither the tribes went up, even the tribes of HaShem, as a testimony unto Israel, to give thanks unto the name of HaShem. For there were set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; may they prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say: 'Peace be within thee.' For the sake of the house of HaShem our G-d I will seek thy good. (Psalm 122) And then, "Degel Tziyon al har haBayit; Hair haatika beyadeynu."

Then, they play "Yerushalayim shel zahav". We are all crying. In retrospect, the silence before the reading of Mizmor Kuf Chof Bet must have been their searching for a way to announce the fulfillment of the 19 hundred year old dream of our people. Captain Prof. Talmon breaks out a bottle of vodka and we have a lechayim. Euphoria.

I go back to the dorms and a bunch of us walk into the center of town. We stand on Rechov Yafo and watch our troops returning. All of Yerushalayim is there: secular, kipa, serugah, Chasidim. We cheer our troops coming back on half-tracks and jeeps – they are sweaty, bloody, dirty, exhausted, but waving and smiling. Finally, we walk back to campus. We are overwhelmed, "Beshuv HaShem et Shivat Tziyon hayeenu kecholmim".

On the sixth day, on Shabbat, I walk to Haychal Shlomo. I have never seen the streets so crowded. It seems that all Yerushalayim is going to shul. We know by now that over 500 of our soldiers have been killed – the final tally will be over 750. We know that over 15,000 of the enemy are dead. The final total will be 18,000. We know how well Tzahal was trained, and how hard they fought. And yet, and yet, there is an inescapable understanding that we had to give thanks to Hashem for the nisim veniflaot that we experienced without even knowing it.

In Haychal Shlomo, the Rav haRashi Isser Yehuda Unterman, z"l, gets up to speak. He says, "We have to understand that the Mashiach is not the most important thing that we look forward to. What is important is Geulah, and the Mashiach is only the symbol of Geulah. And today we have entered into Geulah." And that day, no one was going to tell him, "no". Even though things haven't worked out since 1967 as we would have hoped, I do think that we are living in Geulah. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, during Shivat Tziyon, according to the Tanakh that was Geulah. In those days, we had a state, we had Yerushalayim, we had a Beit-Hamikdash, but we did not have an independent government, even though it was semi-autonomous. Today, we live in another Shivat Tziyon. We have a state, we have Yerushalayim, we have an independent government, but we do not have a Beit-Hamikdash, even though we have a multitude of yeshivot and batei-knesset. This may not be the beginning of the final Geulah, but we have to ask ourselves if we are doing our part to make it so. A few days after the end of the war is Shavuot. The army has cleared out the buildings in front of the Kotel and for the first time the people are allowed to come to the Kotel. Over 400,000 people come to the Kotel – one out of every five Jews in the country come to see and be seen - lehayraot.

Personally, I know that I did not deserve to have this experience – to have been in Yerushalayim during the six-day war. Over the previous 1900 years how many millions of Jews would have given all that they had to come to Yerushalayim? How many pious Jews lived every day with a hope that was never realized? How many died bekidush HaShem in the Crusades, in the Inquisition, in the Chielminicki massacres, in the pogroms, in the Holocaust and in other persecutions too numerous to mention?

I salute those who are making aliyah. We all have to fully appreciate what it means to have a Jewish state in Eretz Yisrael, what it means to have Yerushalayim back. We have to appreciate the debt we owe to Israelis of all stripes and backgrounds, to all Israeli soldiers, to all those who put their lives on the line every day while we live here in safety and comfort. And we have to appreciate the debt we owe to HaShem shehecheyanu vekiymanu vehigiyanu lazman hazeh.

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From: office@etzion.org.il on behalf of Yeshivat Har Etzion Office [office@etzion.org.il] Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2005 3:51 PM To: yhe-holiday@etzion.org.il Subject: Special Shavuot Package  
YESHIVAT HAR ETZION ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM) YHE-HOLIDAY: SPECIAL SHAVUOT 5765 PACKAGE  
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## THE IMPORTANCE OF IN-DEPTH TORAH STUDY

BY HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL

Translated by Rav David Strauss

### I. Serving G-d Out of Internal Desire

In order to grasp the importance of in-depth Torah study, we must first understand the significance of the idea of "serving G-d." The Gemara in Chagiga (9b) states: Bar Hei Hei said to Hillel: What is meant by the verse (Malakhi 3:18), "You will return and see the difference between a righteous person and a wicked person, between one who serves G-d and one who does not serve Him"? Isn't a "righteous person" the same as "one who serves G-d" and "a wicked person" the same as "one who does not serve Him"? [Hillel] answered [Bar Hei Hei]: One who serves [G-d] and one who does not serve Him are both completely righteous. Nevertheless, there is no comparison between one who repeats his chapter a hundred times and one who repeats his chapter one hundred and one times. We see

from here that a person can be perfectly righteous, but still he is not classified as "a servant of G-d."

I believe that our primary educational goal should be to bring a person to the level of "a servant of G-d." This is not because I think that from an educational perspective we must always set the highest possible standards, but rather because it is particularly necessary in our generation to emphasize the idea of "serving G-d." One of the fundamental principles in our education and in general culture is the idea of autonomy: a person should act not because of external pressure, but out of internal conviction and as an expression of his individual personality. We

aspire for our students to act not because we coerce them to behave in a certain manner, but because they themselves wish to behave that way. From a religious-educational perspective as well, both the Sefat Emet and Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook emphasize the idea that it is in our service of G-d that we give expression to our individual natures.[1] The Gemara in Chagiga teaches us that "there is no comparison between one who repeats his chapter a hundred times and one who repeats his chapter one hundred and one times." A servant of G-d does not act by rote. "A hundred times" denotes rote action, whereas "a hundred and one times" refers to action that is not routine, action that expresses a person's inner desires.

Regarding the verse, "And if you will make Me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stone" (Shemot 20:21), Rashi cites Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma'el which states:

Every time the word "im" is used in the Torah, it refers to actions the doing of which is optional ("if"), except in three instances: "And when ('im') you bring the meal-offering of first fruits" (Vayikra 2:14) ... "When ('im') you lend my people money" (Shemot 22:24) ... "And when ('im') you make Me an altar of stone..."

Rashi explains that in these three instances the word "im" means "when." Why, then, was the word "im" employed in these places? Maharal explains (in his commentary to Rashi, Gur Aryeh):

We suggest that Scripture uses the term "im," even though [these actions] are obligatory, because if a person does them out of a sense of obligation, as if he were fulfilling a royal edict, he does not please G-d. For a person must do them of his own free will, and when he does them of his own free will, G-d is pleased. For regarding an action that is necessary and obligatory, he does not have to look for any rationale; he is simply fulfilling a royal edict. If he does these three things as if he were fulfilling a royal edict, it is nothing. Maharal explains that the wording of these three mitzvot emphasizes the point that they should be fulfilled not out of a sense of obligation, but because of an inner desire to fulfill them. We fully understand this explanation with respect to the mitzva of lending money without interest: a person should perform acts of charity not because he is obligated to do so, but because he has a generous heart and he wishes to be charitable. Similarly, regarding the mitzva of the omer meal-offering, we

understand that it should be performed out of a sense of thanksgiving to G-d. As for the mitzva of building a stone altar, Maharal writes:

For if he builds an altar, which constitutes service of G-d, blessed be He, offering sacrifices upon it, and he fulfills [the mitzva] merely as a royal edict – this is not service, for service must be performed willingly, and then he is called "a servant." But if he is coerced, he is not "a servant." Similarly, if he lends money as if he were fulfilling a royal edict, this is not a mitzva. We see from here that "a servant" is one

who acts out of free will, and not only because of some external factor. From here stems the great importance of the idea of autonomy in our spiritual world, which corresponds to the idea of "a servant of G-d."

### II. Serving G-d through the Intellect

In light of this definition of Divine service as service performed out of man's free will, the criteria are relative and liable to change from period to period and from person to person. Service of G-d, as distinguished from the observance of mitzvot, is determined according to the major emphases that are relevant to a particular period and a particular person. The service of G-d will always find expression in the hundred and first time, that is to say, not in a person's routine conduct, imposed from above, but in what is important to a person from the inside.

Today, the intellect is a very important component of a person's life. In order for a person to acquire a profession, to advance in his chosen field, and to reach top levels of management – for all these things a person must engage in strenuous intellectual effort. The centrality of intellect determines special emphases in our service of G-d today, and this in several spheres.

In many places, Rabbi Kook emphasizes the importance of developing a deep conceptual world, particularly in a generation which heavily emphasizes man's intellectual faculties. For example, he writes in Be-Ikvei Ha-Tzon (Avodat Elokim, pp. 142-143):

If in a particular generation or generations all the general ideas have become elevated and developed, but those ideas which pertain to the Divine show no development, that generation remains in a lowly and unfortunate state, the religious fissures multiply, breach after breach, and there is no remedy other than intensive intellectual work... until the concepts pertaining to G-d become elevated, corresponding to the intellectual and moral development of the general culture reached by that generation in general.

Rabbi Kook is talking here about the need for sophisticated concepts in the realm of faith and Jewish thought. There is, however, an educational need to apply this principle to the intellectual aspect of Divine service, which finds expression in Torah study. Particularly during a period when intellectual pursuits are so central in human life, and especially for a person who chooses to engage in an intellectual profession, it is critically important that the service of G-d find special expression in this realm, and not only in the observance of mitzvot. This is the reason that it is so important for a person to continue with in-depth Torah study his entire life, even after he has left full-time study in the beit midrash. This is not only because this is the highest level of Torah study, but because it is in this way that the service of G-d finds expression in its fullest intensity. In a world where so much importance is attached to the intellect, a person cannot possibly fulfill his obligation by learning Daf Yomi, or the like, which does not require great intellectual effort. The brain, the seat of the intellect, is man's most important organ. Should we content ourselves with serving G-d with our hands and other organs – taking the shofar in our hands and blowing it with our mouths, donning tefillin and eating matza on Pesach – and let our brains lie idle, uninvolved in His service? A person who does not occupy himself in Torah study lacks something very basic in his service of G-d. Should we leave our brains and intellect for our careers, for acquiring academic degrees, and serve G-d only with our other organs? A professional craftsman can express his service of

G-d if he builds a synagogue in a way that makes full use of his talents.

However, in a generation that attaches so much importance to the intellect, it is important that the intellect, too, be employed in the service of G-d. In a period when people invest such great efforts in various fields of study, should the service of G-d not demand strenuous application of the intellect? Precisely at such a time, it is especially important that Torah study should be serious and in no way inferior in intellectual profundity to other realms of study. The service of G-d will not survive in our day if its bearers are void of Torah scholarship. It is impossible to live a serious religious life without deep Torah learning.

III. "And to Serve Him" – This Refers to Study  
The idea that Torah study is a necessary component of divine service is also found in Sifrei (Devarim 41) in a passage that is cited by Rambam in his Sefer Ha-Mitzvot (positive commandment 5): "And to serve Him" (Devarim 11:13) – this refers to study... Another explanation: "And to serve Him" – this refers to prayer. We see here that, according to Rambam, Torah study is not only a fulfillment of the mitzva of "And you shall teach them to your children" (Devarim 11:19), but also a fulfillment of the mitzva of serving G-d. According to this, it would appear that even women, who are exempt from the mitzva of Torah study, are nevertheless obligated today to study Torah because of the mitzva of serving G-d, for, as was stated above, a major component of the mitzva of serving G-d, particularly in our day, is fulfilled through Torah study, which is the service of G-d through the intellect.

A person is obligated to fulfill the mitzva of tzitzit only if he is wearing a four-cornered garment. The Gemara in Menachot (41a) states, however, that someone who seeks ways to exempt himself from having to put tzitzit on the corners of his garment "will be punished at a time of [Divine] anger." Mordekhai (ad loc., no. 945, cited by Bet Yosef, Orach Chayyim 24) says: "We, who are not accustomed to wear four-cornered garments, will not be punished even at a time of [Divine] anger." In other words, the prohibition of seeking ways to exempt oneself from the obligation of tzitzit only applies when special importance is attached to wearing four-cornered garments. According to this, it is possible that the same idea applies to the service of G-d: a time when special importance is attached to the intellect is defined as a "time of anger" with respect to the importance of in-depth Torah study.

#### IV. The Value of Talmud Study

Torah study in our Yeshiva focuses upon in-depth study of Gemara. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi writes in his Tanya (chapter 5) about the value and importance of such study: When any intellect perceives and understands some intellectual subject, the mind grasps that subject and encompasses it, and the subject is grasped and encompassed by, and is clothed within, the intellect that understood and perceived it. Also, the subject is clothed within the subject at the time of intellectual comprehension and grasping. When, for example, one understands and comprehends a particular halakha in the Mishna or Gemara, clearly and thoroughly, his intellect grasps and encompasses that halakha, and his intellect is also clothed in it at that time. Now, this halakha [that one grasps intellectually] is the wisdom and will of G-d. It so arose in His will that if, for example, Reuven would claim thus and Shimon thus, such and such should be the verdict between them. Even if it never did nor ever will come to pass that litigation occurs over these arguments and claims, yet, since it arose thus in G-d's will and wisdom that if one person would claim this way and the other that way, the verdict be such and such, therefore when one knows and comprehends this verdict as a halakha set forth in the Mishna or Gemara or the halakhic codifiers, he then actually comprehends and grasps the will and wisdom of G-d.

This explains how Torah study leads to the comprehension of G-d's wisdom and to communion with Him. From an existential perspective, however, we can understand the value of such study with the help of a midrash (Shemot Rabba 33) regarding the verse,

"That they take Me an offering" (Shemot 25:2): Can you conceive a transaction in which the seller is sold with his goods? G-d, however, said to Israel: "I have sold you My Torah, but with it, as it were, I also have been sold," as it says: "That they take Me an offering" – they take Me. It can be compared to the only daughter of a king whom another king married. When he wished to return to his country and take his wife with him, he [the father] said to him: "My daughter, whose hand I have given to you, is my only child. I cannot part with her, neither can I say to you: 'Do not take her,' for she is now your wife. This favor, however, I would request of you; wherever you go to live, have a chamber ready for me that I may dwell with you, for I cannot leave my daughter." Thus G-d said to Israel: "I have given you a Torah from which I cannot part, and I also cannot tell you not to take it; but this I would request: wherever you go make for Me a house wherein I may sojourn," as it says: "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them" (Shemot 25:8). A person who studies Torah "takes" G-d with him and creates a bond with Him. Even if we are unable to explain exactly how this bond is created, history proves that without intensive Torah study, nothing will remain. Jewish communities in which there was no Torah study, no occupation with the intricate discussions of Abaye and Rava, did not survive. Go and look at all the experiments that have been made in this area to this day, go and visit all the various batei midrash, and you will see that the only institutions to survive are those where Gemara was and continues to be studied. Gemara shi'urim continue for twenty or thirty years, whereas other classes generally last for a year or two, and then are discontinued.

From time to time we should stop and consider the greatness of Torah, its grand teachings, the mighty revolution that it brought to the world. Then we will understand that the small details regarding "an ox that gored a cow" or "the mouth that forbade the mouth that allows" are part of a gigantic system. A scientist who works on tiny details, on a single atom, on a gene that he succeeded in isolating, understands from them the wisdom that lies hidden in the entire universe. He knows little about what is going on in other areas, but from his recognition of the wisdom lying in the detail before him, he learns to recognize and understand that this isolated detail is part of a much larger world. The same applies to Torah study. The understanding of the small detail does not exhaust itself in the detail itself and its content. This detail is part of a way of life, part of a Torah containing morality and wisdom, refinement and uprightness.

[This essay is a chapter from Rav Amital's book, Jewish Values in a Changing World (Ktav, 2005). The book can be ordered here: <http://www.vbm-torah.org/newbooks.htm>.]

#### FOOTNOTE:

[1] See, for example, Sefat Emet (Chukkat 5633): Every individual Jew has a portion in our Holy Torah; he must only draw himself close to the light of the Torah through fear of Heaven. When it becomes clear to the individual that all of his vitality stems from G-d, blessed be He, and he clings to this point, he will find his own kind, and his portion of the Torah, that which is impressed and engraved in every individual Jew, will be awakened.

For Rabbi Kook, see Orot Ha-Kodesh (III, musar ha-kodesh, 97): The inner and essential self of the individual and the community only reveals itself in proportion to the holiness and purity, to the supreme might absorbed from the holy light of the heavenly splendor, that burns with it.

Some have found a source for this idea in the words of Rambam. A bill of divorce given under duress is null and void, but if a man is coerced by a Jewish court to grant a divorce, the bill of divorce is valid, because he is bound by the mitzva to obey the words of the Sages. Rambam explains this point at length in Hilkhot Gerushin 2:20: If a person who may be legally compelled to divorce his wife refuses to do so, a Jewish court in any place and at any time may beat him until he says, "I consent," and writes a bill of divorce, and the bill of divorce is valid... Why is this bill of divorce not null and void, seeing that it is the product of duress...? Because duress applies only to one who is compelled and pressed to do something that the Torah does not obligate him to do, for example, one who is lashed until he consents to sell something or give it away as

a gift. On the other hand, he whose evil inclination induces him to violate a commandment or commit a transgression, and who is lashed until he does what he is obligated to do, cannot be regarded as a victim of duress; rather, he has brought duress upon himself by submitting to his evil intention. Therefore, this man who refuses to divorce his wife, inasmuch as he desires to be part of the people of Israel, to abide by all the commandments, and to keep away from transgressions – it is only his inclination that has overwhelmed him – once he is lashed until his inclination is weakened, and he says "I consent," it is the same as if he had given the divorce voluntarily.

The implication is that the true desire of every Jew is to fulfill the mitzvot, and that it is only on account of his weakness that he fails to do so.

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From: Kol Torah [koltorah@koltorah.org] Sent: Friday, May 06, 2005 2:30 PM  
To: koltorah@koltorah.org Subject: For Naso Kol Torah A Defense of Shimshon pt1 & pt2

KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County  
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### A DEFENSE OF SHIMSHON BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

For the past two summers, TABC ran a week long Tanach Kollel where a Sefer of Tanach was studied for three hours each day. This past year, more than twenty young men from a wide variety of Yeshiva High Schools gathered to learn Sefer Shofetim in this wonderful program (this summer the TABC Tanach Kollel shall study Ezra and Nechemia from June 20- June 24, please visit [www.tabc.org](http://www.tabc.org) for more information). In this essay we shall share some thoughts that we developed in the Tanach Kollel about Shimshon. This essay is also based on Dr. Yisrael Rozenson's work entitled Sh'fot Hashofetim, a Shiur delivered by Rav Jack Bieler on the topic of Shimshon and my Shiur in Sefer Shofetim that I conducted after the Sunday morning Minyan when I served as rabbi at the Sephardic Congregation of Teaneck.

**A Problematic Character and Story** The Shimshon story appears problematic on three levels. First is that his behavior with Nochri women appears to be outrageously inappropriate. It is especially problematic for someone who is described twice (15:20 and 16:31; all Tanach references in this essay refer to Sefer Shofetim unless otherwise indicated) as one who served as a Shofet of Am Yisrael for twenty years. Second, the story appears to have a mythical character (in regard to the power of Shimshon's hair), which is entirely uncharacteristic of Tanach. Third is that the Navi states (14:4) that Hashem subtly arranged for Shimshon to marry a Plishti woman. Why would Hashem orchestrate such negative behavior? Moreover, it seems that Shimshon lost his free will in this matter. Accordingly, why did Hashem lead Shimshon on a path leading to such a horrific end?

One might be tempted to claim that Shimshon represents the low point of Sefer Shofetim and to view his heroics in fighting the Plishtim as mere personal revenge. However, we shall follow the path advocated by Rav Kook (see Igrot Re'iyah 555) that one should engage in Limud Zechut, seeking ways to defend rather than criticize others (see Avot 1:6). Indeed, the Rishonim adopt this approach in regard to Shimshon (see Rambam Hilchot Issurei Bi'ah 13:14, Radak to Shofetim 13:4 and Ralbag to Shofetim 13:3). They defend Shimshon yet they do not completely excuse his failings. In this essay we seek to delve into the story and character of Shimshon in order to understand this noble, yet somewhat flawed and tragic individual from whom we can learn so much.

**The Positives of Shimshon** The Tanach and Chazal (Sotah 9b) do not deny Shimshon's negative behavior. The tragic end of his life – his blindness (16:21), being robbed of his dignity (16:25) and his violent death (16:30) – all indicate Divine disapproval of some of his actions. A dominant theme of Tanach (emphasized by Chazal specifically in connection with Shimshon) is that Hashem operates this world based on the Midah Kineged Midah principle; in other words, "you reap what you sow." Nonetheless, we can identify many positive aspects of Shimshon's life. Most obvious is Shimshon's apparent full observance of the laws of Nezirut that was imposed on him (except once when he was under severe psychological pressure). Furthermore, Shimshon's fundamentally positive nature is reflected in the story (15:9-13) where the tribe of Yehudah extradites Shimshon to the Plishtim upon the latter's command. Shimshon could have harmed the leaders of Yehudah when they came to extradite him to the Plishtim (perhaps he even enjoyed the Halachic right to do so, see Sanhedrin 82a, Mishneh Lamelech to Hilchot Rotzei'ach 1:15 and Afikei Yam 2:40). Nevertheless, Shimshon chooses

not to harm the leaders of Yehudah and saves his heroics for when he is in the hands of the Plishti authorities. Indeed, civil war was tragically not taboo during the period of the Shofetim (Sefer Shofetim records two civil wars occurring during this era). This clearly proves that Shimshon was motivated by nationalistic concerns for Am Yisrael and not merely by personal revenge. In fact, Shimshon never complains to Hashem or to anyone else that he never received the support of his family (as did Gidon in his fight against the Midyanim) or any other member of Am Yisrael. Other explicit positive behaviors of Shimshon are his two Tefillot that the Navi records that serve as an example of reaching out to Hashem in times of distress. Finally, we noted that the Navi writes that Hashem wanted Shimshon to marry a Nochri woman, which seemingly indicates Hashem's approval of Shimshon's actions. There is also a subtle indication in the Navi of its ambivalent attitude towards Shimshon. Dr. Rozenson asserts that in Sefer Shofetim the leaders may be evaluated in terms of the length of their tenure. The most positive Shofetim, such as Devorah (5:31), Otniel Ben Kenaz (3:12) and Gidon (8:28) ruled for forty years. Ehud ben Geira's actions resulted in eighty years of stability (3:30), which might be interpreted as forty years under Ehud leadership and forty years under the leadership of Shamgar ben Anat (see Da'at Mikra to Shofetim 3:31).

By contrast, the most negative leader in Sefer Shofetim, Avimelech, rules for only three years (9:22). Yiftach, whom Chazal (Rosh Hashanah 25b) imply is the least worthy of the Shofetim, ruled only six years (12:7). Dr. Rozenson writes that this implies that Yiftach was more worthy than Avimelech (who was not even a legitimate Shofet; see Da'at Mikra to 9:22) but far less worthy than Gidon or Otniel ben Kenaz. Accordingly, the fact that the Navi twice states that Shimshon served as a Shofet for twenty years might reflect the Navi's ambivalent attitude towards Shimshon. He is more worthy than Yiftach but less worthy than Devorah or Ehud ben Geira. We should also note that Shimshon fits into the pattern of the unconventional leaders of Sefer Shofetim. Ehud is left-handed (3:15), Gidon stemmed from a family that did not enjoy a prominent stature (6:15), Devorah was a woman leader and Yiftach appears to be of questionable lineage (11:1). The Navi might be seeking to teach us that Hashem has many means in which to save us and that Divine deliverance can come from unexpected sources (see Da'at Mikra to Shofetim pp. 135-137).

**Understanding Shimshon** Shimshon did not choose his role as a leader of Am Yisrael. Dr. Rozenson argues that the role had to be forced upon him because no leader willingly emerged from Am Yisrael to save them from the enemy, as had happened in the earlier chapters in Sefer Shofetim. The reason for this is that the Plishtim ruled us for forty years, far longer than any other subjugator in Sefer Shofetim.

The number forty in Tanach (especially in Sefer Shofetim) represents transformation, such as the case of the Mabal, the Dor HaMidbar, and the Teshuvah of the people in Nineveh in the time of Yonah. The number forty has similar significance in the Torah She'be'al Peh (Chazal state that grape juice is transformed to wine in forty days, a fetus has a "human appearance" forty days after conception and the minimum amount of water in a Mikveh is forty Se'ah). Am Yisrael was psychologically transformed during these forty years to accept Plishti rule and to avoid any resistance to them. This attitude is clearly expressed by the leaders of Yehudah when they criticize Shimshon for his aggressive acts against the Plishtim (15:11). Thus, Hashem had to force an unusual leader onto a docile and submissive Am Yisrael.

The Malach told Shimshon's mother that Shimshon would begin the delivery of Am Yisrael from the Plishtim (13:5). Accordingly, Shimshon's actions might have inspired Am Yisrael to join him and fight the Plishtim (in general, when studying Tanach one should often ask "what should have happened" and compare with what actually did occur). Once he demonstrated that it was possible to resist the Plishtim, Am Yisrael should have joined him. Shimshon could have led Am Yisrael in full-fledged battle, similar to Ehud ben Geira and Gidon. Tragically, though, this did not happen.

Shimshon in this way parallels Moshe Rabbeinu, whose actions can be interpreted (see Rav Moshe Lichtenstein's Tzir VaTzon) as seeking to motivate Am Yisrael to resist the Egyptians by setting an example in his killing of one Egyptian oppressor (Shemot 2:12). Unfortunately, Am Yisrael rejected this action of Moshe Rabbeinu and he therefore withdrew from Am Yisrael for many years. Shimshon's actions in chapter 16 might be understood in a similar manner as we explained earlier. The Ralbag (ad. loc.) explains that Hashem commanded Shimshon to refrain from wine and haircutting (13:4-5) as a counterbalance to his extraordinary power. It seems that the greater the prowess, power, or privileges that Hashem gives someone, the more restrictions he is given, in order that he use that prowess in an appropriate manner. This might explain why males are given more commandments than women, why Kohanim have more restrictions than other Jews and why the Melech has unique restrictions and obligations (Devarim 17:16-20).

Thus, Hashem gave Shimshon the tools to be able to manage his unusual strength.

However, Shimshon was not able to fully exercise self-restraint for a variety of reasons, as we shall explain later.

**Shimshon's Strategy** The Radak (ad. loc.) explains that Shimshon engaged in guerilla warfare to avoid endangering Am Yisrael. It seems that Shimshon knew that Am Yisrael might not be willing to resist the Plishtim. He thus engaged in actions that the Plishtim would interpret as Shimshon's personal revenge and subsequently not harm Am Yisrael. Shimshon's noble intentions are evident from his words to the leaders of Yehudah, 15:11. They are also evidenced by the fact that when he withdrew from the Plishtim after the fox field burning incident he resided in an uninhabited section of Yehudah (15:8), so as not to endanger the inhabitants of a town that might be providing shelter to Shimshon. Accordingly, Shimshon may be described as engaging in what Chazal (Nazir 23b) call an Aveirah Lishmah (engaging in sinful activity for a noble reason). This is not the first time in Sefer Shofetim that someone engages in an Aveirah Lishmah, as Yael engaged in such behavior with Sisera (note the allusion to Yael in 16:14). In fact, this idea seems to be implicit in Shimshon's riddle (14:14) when he says during the celebration of his first marriage to a Plishti woman "Mei'az Yatza Matok" (something sweet emerges from something fierce; similarly, Shimshon wished the rescue of Am Yisrael to emerge from his sinful marriage).

Shimshon exercised his free will in these actions, even though Hashem wanted the marriage with the Plishti woman to occur (14:4). This appears to be an example of the Tanach phenomenon referred to by some (see the introduction Da'at Mikra commentary to Megillat Esther) as "dual causality." A classic example of this phenomenon was the brothers' exercising their free will in their choice to cast Yosef into a pit, even though Hashem wanted Yosef to go to Egypt (Breishit 45:7 and 50:20). Similarly, Hashem's wanting Shimshon to marry the Plishti woman did not eliminate Shimshon's free will.

**Conclusion** Next week we shall continue with an explanation of Shimshon's failure.

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#### A DEFENSE OF SHIMSHON – PART TWO BY RABBI CHAIM JACHTER

Last week, we discussed the basic issues that arise from the Shimshon story, the positive aspects of the character of Shimshon, and a basic understanding of Shimshon and his strategy. This week, we shall continue with a detailed discussion of how each aspect of the Shimshon story can be placed in perspective in light of our previous discussions. If you missed last week's article, it is available on [www.koltorah.org](http://www.koltorah.org).

**Explaining Shimshon's Failure** We explained last week that Shimshon's marrying a Plishti woman was an Aveirah Lishmah (a sin performed for the sake of heaven). However, it is vital to note that engaging in an Aveira Lishmah necessarily entails negative consequences. Hashem holds us accountable even for Aveirot performed for noble reasons (as noted at length by Rav Elchanan Samet, *Iyunim Bifarshiot Hashavua* 62-74). Moreover, the Radak notes (based on Sotah 9b) that Shimshon ultimately failed because his motivations were not entirely pure, as he felt an attraction for the Plishti woman (note that we have similar expectations for one who engages in Yibbum, which is the primary reason for the Ashkenazic tradition to refrain from Yibbum, see Rama Even Haezer 165:1). However, this failing of Shimshon is understandable as it would be very difficult for anyone to act in a purely Lishmah manner in such a situation. This would certainly be an incredibly difficult challenge for Shimshon, in light of the Gemara (Sukkah 52a) that states that the greater the individual the greater his Yetzer Hara (libido).

Shimshon takes a drastic turn for the worse in the beginning of Chapter 16 when he visits a Plishti prostitute in Aza (Gaza City). What motivated him to do this profoundly inappropriate act? It might be the result of Shimshon's alienation from Am Yisrael. Am Yisrael should have responded to Shimshon's actions by rallying behind him and fighting the Plishtim, as we noted last week. However, not only did Am Yisrael not cooperate with Shimshon, they even extradited him to the Plishtim. Moreover, Shimshon never seemed to find a home among Am Yisrael. His career began (13:25) between the towns of Tzorah and Eshte'ol (note these two towns the next time you travel between Beit Shemesh and Ben Gurion airport) and was buried between these two towns (16:31).

Accordingly, Shimshon might have felt alienated from Am Yisrael and left them for a Plishti woman. This might be seen to be similar to Moshe Rabbeinu who married a Midianite woman after his alienation from Am Yisrael (this seems to have occurred after Am Yisrael harmed him instead of helping him in his resistance to the Egyptian oppression, as explained by Rav Moshe Lichtenstein in his work *Tzir VaTzon*). Indeed, it is easy to feel compassion for Shimshon, since a human being cannot live alone (Bereshit 2:18 and Rashi to Bereshit 2:20-21). Moreover, Shimshon's visiting the prostitute is a consequence of an Aveirah Lishmah. Even though the sin is performed for a noble reason, it nonetheless

habituates one to engage in similar Aveirot for less than noble reasons (see Eiruvin 40b and Teshuvot Shevet Halevi 6:26). Dr. Yisrael Rozenson explains Shimshon's bringing the gates of Aza to Chevron as an expression of his frustration with Am Yisrael in general and Shevet Yehudah specifically. Shimshon brought the gates to the top of the Chevron mountains, the center of Yehudah's tribal land and one of the highest locations in Eretz Yisrael, in order to make a statement. Shimshon can be understood as saying, "If you do not bring yourselves to Aza to fight the Plishtim, then I will bring Aza to you." Alternatively, he tries to communicate to them that Aza is now conquerable since its walls have been breached. The message is directed specifically to Yehudah because their tribe's mission is to lead Am Yisrael in battle (see Bereshit 49:8-10 and Shofetim 1:1-2). Indeed, David HaMelech (who stems from Shevet Yehudah) who finally released us from Plishti rule, first established his rule in Chevron. Perhaps Shimshon foreshadows this role of David HaMelech. In addition, Shimshon's ripping a lion apart (14:6) might symbolize his frustration with Yehudah's lack of leadership (recall that Yehudah is symbolized by a lion, Bereshit 49:9).

**The Delilah Debacle** The lack of response to this dramatic act seems to have driven Shimshon "over the edge." Indeed, the Navi connects the Aza gate incident with Shimshon's marriage to Delilah (16:4). For the first time Shimshon is described not only as finding a Plishti woman who attracts him, but even finding one that he loves. Delilah lived in Nachal Sorek, which is not one of the five Plishti centers described in the Tanach (see Shmuel 1:6:17) and, as Dr. Rozenson notes, the Tanach does not mention a specific place in Nachal Sorek where she resides (Nachal Sorek is a wadi that extends from the Jerusalem hills through the Sh'feilah, the lowlands in the general area of present day Beit Shemesh). Thus it is possible that Delilah herself was not rooted in Plishti society and thus was emotionally attractive to Shimshon, because they were both social outcasts (and according to the Rambam and Radak, Shimshon converted her). Shimshon's profound desperation for love and human fellowship (and not mere gratification of his Yetzer Hara) is most apparent in what may be the most pathetic scene in the entire Tanach. In 16:19, Delilah holds Shimshon on her knees while putting him to sleep and summons the barber to cut his hair. It almost seems that Shimshon subconsciously wanted to be captured, as he knew that Delilah summoned the Plishtim each time she acted on his three false explanations of his strength. Indeed, his entire marriage with Delilah was self-destructive; we should also note that a number of powerful figures in Sefer Shofetim met their end because of a woman's action – Shimshon, Avimelech and Siserah. **The Cutting and Regrowth of Shimshon's Hair** We noted earlier the apparent problem of the seemingly mythical nature of the Shimshon story. Why should cutting his hair dissipate Shimshon's special strength and why would his hair's regrowth while in the Plishti jail somewhat revive his powers (16:22)? The answer seems to be based on the aforementioned Ralbag's explanation of the Nazirite restrictions placed on Shimshon. Hashem coupled his endowing Shimshon with special strength with the imposition of extra restrictions. Shimshon's betrayal of Hashem's command is the fundamental reason Hashem took away Shimshon's special power. The cutting of Shimshon's hair is not the fundamental reason for Shimshon's lost powers.

Accordingly, one might interpret the regrowth of Shimshon's hair as an expression of the Teshuvah that Shimshon engaged in while imprisoned (I admit that this interpretation is influenced by John Milton's "Samson Agonistes"). This seems to explain why Hashem granted Shimshon's last request. Shimshon requested the revenge for personal reasons and not for the purpose of Am Yisrael (16:28) due to his alienation from Am Yisrael.

**Conclusion** Accordingly, we can identify two distinct periods in Shimshon's life; his life from Chapters 13-15 on one hand and Chapter 16 on the other. In the first period, Shimshon faithfully worked for Am Yisrael in highly unconventional ways. In chapter 16 he was moved by understandable desperation to take steps that led to the horrific and tragic end of his life. This would seem to be why the Tanach mentions that Shimshon served as a Shofet for Am Yisrael twice, once at the conclusion of Chapter 15 and once at the end of Chapter 16. The Tanach seems to distinguish between these two fundamentally different periods in Shimshon's life. Shimshon's heroics seem not to be performed for naught. The Tanach notes that in his death he killed more Plishtim than during his lifetime. This might refer not only to his destruction of the building of the Plishti house of Dagon but also to the inspiration that Shimshon provided for King Sha'ul and David HaMelech in overcoming the Plishtim against overwhelming odds. In his death his family bravely came into hostile Plishti territory and recovered Shimshon's body (16:31). Perhaps this reflects the impact that Shimshon had in his death on later heroic actions of Am Yisrael. One might draw an analogy to the ghetto fighters' desperate fight against the evil Nazis (may their evil name be blotted out), which posthumously inspired the brave soldiers of Tzahal to defeat their enemies despite the overwhelming odds. This is especially relevant for this

week as we take the opportunity on Yom Haatzma'ut to thank Hashem for inspiring and directing Tzahal to perform great miracles.

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From: Halacha [halacha@yutorah.org] Sent: Monday, May 30, 2005 8:26 PM Subject: Weekly Halacha Overview- The Mitzvah of Simchat Yom Tov

RABBI JOSH FLUG

THE MITZVAH OF SIMCHAT YOM TOV

The Torah (Devarim 16:14) states "v'samachta b'chagecha," one must rejoice on the festivals. This is known as the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. What is the requirement of simchat Yom Tov? The Gemara, Pesachim 109a, states that in the times of the Beit HaMikdash one can only fulfill the mitzvah by eating the meat of the korban shelamim. Nowadays, when there is no Beit HaMikdash, men fulfill the mitzvah by drinking wine, and women fulfill the mitzvah by wearing nice clothing.

If in the times of the Beit HaMikdash, one can only fulfill the mitzvah by eating meat from the korban shelamim, what allows one to fulfill the mitzvah nowadays through other means? Tosafot, Moed Katan 14b s.v. Aseh, write that the biblical mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov can only be fulfilled with the korban shelamim. Fulfillment of the mitzvah with wine and clothing is only rabbinic in nature. However, Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:17-18, implies that even nowadays there is a biblical mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. If so, how is it possible to fulfill the mitzvah without eating the korban shelamim? R. Chaim Soloveitchik (cited in Emek Beracha pg. 108) explains that there are two aspects to the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. The first aspect is an objective form of simchat Yom Tov that one can only fulfill by eating the meat of the korban shelamim. The second aspect is a subjective form of the mitzvah that one can fulfill by partaking of things that bring happiness to oneself. In the times of the Beit HaMikdash, both aspects of the mitzvah were in place. However, nowadays, when it is no longer possible to eat the meat of the korban shelamim, only the subjective aspect of the mitzvah exists.

Rambam's opinion

Based on R. Chaim's analysis, the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov can be fulfilled with anything that brings one happiness. Ostensibly, even wine is not a requirement if wine does not bring one happiness. Nevertheless, Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18, writes that in order to fulfill the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov, one must eat meat and drink wine. This ruling is noteworthy for two reasons. First, Rambam does not assume the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov to be subjective. He gives clear guidelines as to what may be used to fulfill the mitzvah. Second, the requirement to eat meat is only mentioned by the Gemara in the context of eating the meat of the korban shelamim. There is no source in the Gemara indicating that there is an element of simcha in eating unconsecrated meat (b'sar chullin).

For this reason, R. Aryeh L. Ginzburg, Teshuvot Sha'agat Aryeh no. 65, writes that Rambam is indeed of the opinion that the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov is subjective and one can fulfill the mitzvah with whatever brings happiness to oneself. Rambam's mention of meat and wine is only because meat and wine are the default methods of achieving happiness. If someone achieves happiness through some other means, he can certainly use those means instead.

However, R. Shlomo Luria, Yam Shel Shlomo, Beitza 2:5, asserts that Rambam's opinion is to be taken literally, and meat is

essential to the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. In the times of the Beit HaMikdash, one was able to fulfill the mitzvah simply by eating the meat of the korban shelamim. Nowadays, when there is no possibility of eating the korban shelamim, one must still eat meat, but complement the simchat Yom Tov by drinking wine as well.

R. Yosef Karo, Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim 529, disagrees with the opinion of Rambam, and maintains that there is no obligation to eat meat in order to fulfill the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. He codifies his opinion in Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 529:1. Magen Avraham 529:3, adds that there is a mitzvah to eat meat on Yom Tov. However, Magen Avraham seems to contradict himself as he comments elsewhere (696:15) that there is no obligation to eat meat on Yom Tov. Darkei Teshuva 89:19, resolves the apparent discrepancy by positing that Magen Avraham's opinion is that meat is not obligatory. Nevertheless, there is an optional mitzvah to eat meat.

The Frequency of the Mitzvah of Simchat Yom Tov

Does the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov apply at every Yom Tov meal, once a day, or once the entire Yom Tov? Shulchan Aruch, op.cit., writes that one should drink wine at every Yom Tov meal. The implication is that the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov applies at every Yom Tov meal. This also seems to be the opinion of Darkei Teshuva, ibid, who questions the minhag to eat dairy products on Shavuot based on the mitzvah to eat meat as part of simchat Yom Tov. If the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov did not apply to every meal, there would be room to eat meat at one meal, and dairy at another.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, Igrot Moshe, Orach Chaim 3:68, notes that the mitzvah of eating meat is patterned after the obligation to eat the korban shelamim. Just as the obligation of eating the meat of the korban shelamim applies once a day, for every day of the holiday (including Chol HaMoed), so too does the mitzvah to eat unconsecrated meat apply once a day, every day. [See R. Hershel Schachter, B'Ikvei HaTzon 15:11, who distinguishes between Pesach and Sukkot. On Sukkot a different korban musaf is brought every day, and therefore every day is considered to have an independent sanctity. Therefore there is a new obligation of simchat Yom Tov every day. However, on Pesach, where there is no independent sanctity to each day, one can fulfill the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov on the first day, and this would suffice for the entire Pesach.]

R. Moshe Shternbuch, Mo'adim U'Zemanim 1:29, argues that there is no set frequency for the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov. There is a constant obligation to be in a state of simcha. One uses certain mediums to achieve that state, and when the effect of those mediums wear off, one must replenish the state of simcha through those mediums.

Simchat Yom Tov on the First Night of Yom Tov

Assuming that the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov applies to every Yom Tov meal, there may still be an exception. The Gemara, Sukkah 48b, quotes a Beraita that there is no mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov on the first night of Yom Tov. Does this exemption apply only to the mitzvah to eat the korban shelamim or does it apply to all forms of simchat Yom Tov? R. Chaim Soloveitchik, op cit., opines that this exemption is limited to the mitzvah to eat the korban shelamim. The subjective element of the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov applies even on the first night of Yom Tov. However, Teshuvot Sha'agat Aryeh no. 68, concludes that there is no biblical mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov on the first night of Yom Tov. There is however, a rabbinical obligation of simchat Yom Tov on the first night of Yom Tov. Mishna Berurah, Sha'ar HaTziun 546:15, relies on the opinion of Sha'agat Aryeh in permitting a marriage to take place immediately prior to Yom Tov and the wedding meal taking place on Yom Tov. Were there to be a biblical obligation of simchat Yom Tov on the first night of Yom Tov, holding a wedding meal that night would be a violation of ain me'arvin simcha b'simcha, the prohibition of combining two festive occasions. However, since the simcha on the first night is only rabbinic in nature, there are

grounds to permit the wedding meal to take place that night. Accordingly, there are more grounds to permit omission of meat on the first night of Yom Tov than the rest of the Yom Tov meals.

#### Eating Dairy Products on Shavuot

Many families have a custom to eat dairy products on Shavuot. As noted above, Darkei Teshuva questions this minhag based on the obligation to eat meat on Yom Tov. Darkei Teshuva's assertion is based on a number of assumptions. First, nowadays one can only fulfill the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov by eating meat. Second, the mitzvah to eat meat is obligatory. Third, the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov applies to every Yom Tov meal. Fourth, there is an obligation to eat meat on the first night of Yom Tov, and therefore, eating dairy products the first night is not an option. Those who eat dairy products on Shavuot reject one (or more) of his four assumptions. [The source for the minhag to eat dairy products will be discussed in next week's issue.]

It should be noted that Rambam Hilchot Yom Tov 6:16, and Shulchan Aruch op. cit., write that independent of the mitzvah of simchat Yom Tov, there is an obligation to honor Yom Tov the same way one honors Shabbat. Therefore, regardless of whether meat is served at the Yom Tov meal, the meal should be held to the same standards as that of a Shabbat meal.

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#### PENINIM ON THE TORAH

BY RABBI A. LEIB SCHEINBAUM -

Parshas Nasso

And he shall provide him atonement for having sinned regarding the person. (6:11) Rashi cites two opinions of Chazal to explain why the nazir is called a sinner. First, he should have taken greater precautions to avoid becoming tamei, ritually contaminated. Second, he deprived himself of the pleasure of drinking wine. The Kli Yakar supplements the second reason, explaining that a Jew should serve the Almighty amidst joy. Had the nazir truly been happy with his choice to become a nazir, he would have been more careful with regard to contact with tumah. His yetzer hora, evil-inclination, found an "in," an opportunity to bring him down, when it noticed that his whole heart was not into the nezirus.

The rationale behind the failing of tzieir atzmo min ha'yayin, "he deprived himself the pleasure of wine," is that a Jew should realize his good fortune in being able to serve Hashem. We err when we think that we are doing something for Hashem when we perform a mitzvah. On the contrary, it is a privilege to perform a mitzvah, an awesome opportunity to get closer to Hashem. Chazal tell us that Moshe Rabbeinu received great reward for taking Yosef HaTzaddik's bones out of Egypt. They cite the pasuk in Mishlei 10:8, Chacham lev yikach mitzvos, "The wise of heart takes mitzvos," as a reference to Moshe. Why is Moshe called a chacham, wise man? Rather, he should be called a tzaddik, righteous person. The Avnei Nezer explains that two mitzvos were presented before the Jewish people: Bizas Mitzrayim, collecting the spoils of Egypt; and gathering Yosef's bones. Klal Yisrael occupied themselves with the mitzvah of collecting Egyptian spoils, while Moshe saw to Yosef's bones. Does that mean he was wise? The difference is that bizas Mitzrayim had a negia, personal benefit, integral to the mitzvah, while taking Yosef's bones was "pure" mitzvah. Horav Aharon Kotler, zl, explains that a wise man understands that when he performs a mitzvah, he is not giving Hashem anything; rather, he is taking for himself a great spiritual benefit.

Torah protects a person when he views it from the proper perspective. If the study of Torah is nothing more than an intellectual pursuit, it will not have the same effect on the individual as when he focuses on the sweetness of Torah. Torah transforms the one who studies it if the lomaid, student, senses its sweetness and spiritual flavor. One who studies Torah like the nazir who "deprives himself of wine," who thinks that by learning Torah he is relinquishing fun and other frivolities, might develop intellectually, but he will remain spiritually deprived and stagnant. At the first sign of a challenge, he will quickly abdicate his commitment to Torah study.

Horav Avraham Schorr, Shlita, posits that this is the reason that a distinct minority of today's youth are at risk for becoming totally alienated from a Torah way of life. The wonderful education that they have received focused on scholastic achievement, on covering more ground, on a more profound level of understanding, but not on the love one should manifest for the Torah and the joy inherent in learning Hashem's Torah. The excitement, the sweetness, the passion and love are simply not there, because their teachers were not able to transmit these feelings. We are too busy creating lomdim, scholars, and not focusing on the ahavas Torah, love for Torah, that should be the crowning point of their learning. Torah learned with love creates a bond between the lomaid and the Torah.

When the founders of the cheder for young children in Bnei Brak were ready to open their school, they approached the Brisker Rav, zl, for his blessing. They showed the Rav their superior curriculum, indicating the amount of time that was to be devoted to each subject. The Rav listened and then replied, "If I did not know for certain that you are fine upstanding bnei Torah, I would eject you from my home. You sound like maskilim, heretics, whose only concern is mastery of the subject matter. What about inculcating our children with ahavas Torah, middos tovot, character refinement, and raising their level of yiraas Shomayim, fear of Heaven? The problem today is that children do not sense the mesikus, sweetness, of Torah." Torah must be taught and studied with joy, not as a deprivation from the "good life." Our heritage, the Torah, has been transmitted throughout the generations by individuals who have studied it in this manner, infusing themselves with its sweetness, inculcating themselves with its qualities and developing a profound appreciation of its value. I take the liberty of citing two inspirational episodes from Rabbi Yechiel Spero's, Touched by a Story; one about a Torah leader and one about a "common" Jew, that convey this appreciation of Torah.

Horav Chaim Zaitchick, zl, Novardoker Rosh Hayeshivah, was exiled to a Soviet labor camp in Siberia for the "grave" sin of learning and teaching Torah. We do not need a description of life in Siberia. Food was at a bare minimum, and work was back breaking and brutal. Even the water they drank was brought from a spring located three kilometers from camp. Bringing the water was a difficult and thankless job. The pails were heavy, and the road was treacherous. One day, Rav Chaim asked to be the water carrier, because he had heard that there was a village near the spring where there lived another Jew.

He made his way along the difficult path, carrying the heavy pails until he came to a small ramshackle hut at the edge of the village. His heart began to pound when he saw the mezuzah on the door. He knocked softly, and a poor woman opened the door. The home was sparse and obviously poverty stricken. Yet, the woman gave Rav Chaim a small slice of bread, saying, "I am sorry, but this is all I can spare."

"I am not looking for food," replied Rav Chaim. "I am looking for a sefer, volume of Torah literature, anything - even one page, so that I can learn. I am starving for Torah - not for food."

The woman went back inside and called her husband, who responded, "I have only one sefer which I am not going to part with. I am sorry that I cannot help you."

"Please, I beg of you," Rav Chaim pleaded. "I will take anything, but I must learn." The sincerity of Rav Chaim's pleas moved the man, and he

offered, "I have a volume of the Talmud of Nedarim/Nazir which I will split with you."

With tears and trembling hands, Rav Chaim tore the Talmud in half and took Meseches Nedarim for himself. He returned to his quarters, filled with joy at having obtained an entire Mesechta to quench his thirst for Torah.

The second story took place in Eretz Yisrael, shortly after the European Holocaust, as a young teenager came to the Ponovez Yeshivah in search of the Rosh Hayeshivah, Horav Yosef Kahaneman, zl, the Ponevezer Rav. When he located the Rav, the boy introduced himself as a survivor of Auschwitz, the dreaded Nazi death camp.

"Do you have any family?" the Rav asked. Silence was the answer. Obviously, this boy was left alone in the world to fend for himself and see to his future.

"Where did you learn before the war?" the Rav asked. The response was "a Hungarian yeshivah - four and a half years ago." "Do you remember which Mesechta you learned at the time?" The boy closed his eyes and thought. He momentarily returned to those idyllic days when studying Torah was a way of life. He saw his friends in the bais ha'medrash poring over the folios of Talmud and the commentaries. A smile emerged on his face. "Yes, I remember that we were studying Mesechta Chullin shortly before we were sent to Auschwitz," he replied.

"Can you remember anything from the last sugya, topic, that you learned?" Once again, the young boy went back in time to see if he had retained anything from his yeshivah days. He was lost in thought for a few moments, and then his eyes lit up as he exclaimed, "Yes! I remember a machlokes, dispute, between Rashi and Tosfos on Daf mem cheis, page 48." He related the machlokes as if it were a testament to his determination to retain that spark of Torah which had been ignited before the war.

As the young boy finished speaking, the Rav embraced him, and, with tears in his eyes, kissed him lovingly, repeating his name over and over again. He then took the boy by the hand and ran with him from the Ponovez bais ha'medrash. Through the streets of Bnei Brak, they ran to the home of the gadol hador, preeminent Torah leader of the generation, the Chazon Ish, zl. As they entered his home, the Ponevezer Rav shouted, "Rebbe, Netzach Yisrael lo yeshaker! Klal Yisrael and the Torah will survive forever! This boy has lost everything to Hitler; he has no mother, no father, no brothers and sisters; everybody is gone. One thing survived, the machlokes Rashi and Tosfos that he learned four and a half years ago in the yeshivah. He held onto the Rashi and Tosfos throughout the terror of Auschwitz." And then all three began to weep: the Rav, the gadol hador and the young boy who was Klal Yisrael's future.

When Torah is learned in the right manner, with areivus, sweetness, it can endure and sustain us through the darkest moments of our lives. Tomorrow, when we say the Tefillah of V'haarev na, we should take the meaning of these words into consideration.

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From: RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM PARSHA COLUMN [Shabbat\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il] on behalf of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [parshat\_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, June 08, 2005 5:08 AM To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Naso - Shavuot by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Naso - Shavuot (Numbers 4:21-7:89) By Shlomo Riskin Efrat, Israel - Feast of Weeks - What's in the Name?

What is the real significance of the Festival of Shavuot, the only Festival of the bible without a name which truly defines its essence?! Unlike Pesach, which refers to the Pascal lamb sacrifice which was the defining moment of Israelite

commitment to the G-d of Abraham in defiance of the gods of Egypt, thereby making them worthy of, and setting the stage for, their exodus from Egyptian slavery, and Sukkot which refers to the booths in which the Israelites dwelt during their miraculous sojourn in the desert, Shavuot connotes the weeks leading up to a specific day rather than to the day itself! Is it not mandatory for us to attempt to truly understand the message of this second - and major - "pilgrim" festivals (the second of our shalosh regalim)

Fascinatingly enough, both the precise date as well as the true meaning of this "mystery" Festival of Shavuot is dependant upon a famous historical controversy which raged between the Pharisees and Saducees, two ideological "parties" which vied for ascendancy during the Mishnaic period (c.200 BCE - 200 CE). The Saducees, who traced their origins to the well-known priestly clan of Zadok and were committed to the plain meaning of the Bible without the inclusion of the Oral Traditions, maintained that the Biblical command to count seven weeks (Sefirah), "You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the Sabbath" (Lev. 3:15), refers to the first Sunday after the onset of Passover, from when you must continue to count seven complete weeks (from Sunday to Sunday), at the conclusion of which "you shall make the Festival of Shavuot (Deut.16:10)".

These seven weeks fall out during the first harvest period in Israel, beginning with the harvest of the barley (which is the initial omer sacrifice to be brought on that Saturday night) and culminating in the wheat harvest which is expressed by the two loaves of wheat which is the central vegetation Temple sacrifice and "first-fruits" gift of Shavuot.

The Pharisees, who are the forerunners of the Talmudic Sages and who endowed "last-word" authority to the Oral Tradition of Biblical interpretation (Hebrew perush), insisted that the Biblical phrase "the morrow of the Sabbath" refers to the day following the first day of the Passover Festival (taking the Hebrew Shabbat to be identified in this context with Shabbaton, which is Biblically used for Festival elsewhere in that very same Biblical passage of Lev. 23). It is apparent that the date for the Shavuot Festival would differ, depending upon which ideological position determined from when you begin your count!

So divisive did this difference of opinion prove itself to be - after all, the unity of the Jewish people is clearly dependent upon the commonality of the Hebrew calendar - that the day in which this controversy was settled (obviously in accordance with the Pharisees, which is our current practice) was declared to be a semi - Festival upon which one should neither fast nor recite a eulogy (B.T. Taanit 17b, Menahot 65a, based on Megillat Taanit).

What was the real significance of their debate? I heard from my revered teacher Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik the following interpretation. According to the Saducees, the Festival of Shavuot is completely separate and apart from the Festival of Passover, relating not at all to the exodus from Egypt but only to the agricultural reality of the Land of Israel; hence a unit of seven complete weeks - from Sunday to Sunday, beginning the first Sunday from the onset of Passover only because Passover also happens to fall out in the harvesting season - spans the barley to wheat harvest, which is to be seen as a separate period of thanksgiving to G-d, for an agricultural rather than an historical reason. From this perspective, Shavuot is a separate agricultural Festival specifically celebrating the climax of the period with the wheat harvest, but logically incorporating within its name the entire 7-week period of harvest, from barley to wheat.

The Pharisees have a totally different interpretation. The very fact that the Oral Tradition insists that the sefirah count begin on the night following the first day of Passover - even if it falls out in the middle of the week (as it usually does) - links the seven week count inextricably to the Festival of Passover, with the Biblical "until the day following the seventh week you shall count, fifty days" coming out 50 days from the onset of Passover! This indissoluble bond between Passover and Shavuot is not all necessarily true according to the Saducees.

For the Pharisees, Shavuot contains an historical as well as an agricultural significance; the Oral Law defines Shavuot as the time in which we received the Torah from Mount Sinai. Indeed, from the perspective of the Pharisees, Passover is an incomplete Festival, awaiting its completion in the Festival of Shavuot. Passover is merely our freedom from physical bondage, awaiting our freedom from spiritual bondage (the internal blandishments of temptations and addictions) which only comes with the giving of the Torah on Shavuot; Passover is "freedom from" (herut), which, unchannelled, can lead to wild recklessness and licentiousness, awaiting the mission of Torah which will provide us with "freedom for" (aharayut). On Passover we only get as far as the desert, an alien, hostile and undeveloped expanse, awaiting our entrance into Israel and construction of our Holy Temple which the Bible identifies with Shavuot, the Festival of the First Fruits Temple sacrifice; Passover is the first step, our Festival of Fate when G-d forced us out of Egypt with His "outstretched arm and strong hand," whereas Shavuot is our Festival of Destiny, when - by our truly choosing to follow the dictates of Torah -

we will lead the world to peace and redemption from the backdrop of Israel and Jerusalem (Isaiah 2, Micah 4).

Hence, Shavuot is named by the Pharisaic Sages of the Talmud Atzeret, which means "conclusion", with the days of the omer count serving as a connective "holo shel moed" between the beginning of our freedom on Passover and freedom's culmination in redemption on Shavuot. The progression from the one to the other demands rigorous introspection and repentance, commitment to our Torah and its ideals for world repair; the days of the Sefirah must be days of perseverance, preparation, penitence and purification. After all, did not the sanctity of G-d's heavenly throne appear to the elders of Israel at the Sinai Revelation as "white-blue sapphire," and are not the mystical sefirot the emanations of the Divine with which we must sanctify ourselves and our world?

Therefore the culminating Festival of this period is known by the days of preparation, Shavuot; it itself does not yet have a name because we have not yet reached the level of complete redemption. And we read the Book of Ruth, the last chapter of which takes place between the barley and wheat harvest, and which tells of a Moabite woman inspired by the loving Torah of the land of Israel and from whose womb will eventually come the king - redeemer - but only when we become truly worthy!

Shabbat Shalom

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From: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com [mailto:ZeitlinShelley@aol.com]

Sent: Thursday, June 09, 2005 11:33 PM

To: ZeitlinShelley@aol.com

Subject: Some Special Shavuos Thoughts by Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

**SOME SPECIAL SHAVUOS THOUGHTS**

**BY RABBI MOSHE MEIR WEISS**

As we stood at Har Sinai, the Torah testifies that, "Vayichan sham Yisroel, neged haHar;" the Jews encamped in front of the mountain. The commentaries immediately pounce that the word vayichan is in the singular. This is unusual because the Jews numbered some 600,000 men; a number that doesn't include the women, children, and the elderly who also left Egypt. Rashi explains this unusual grammar with the famous comment - we were unified "like one man with one heart." Thus we find the dream of achdus - total unity and national oneness - was achieved at the foot of Har Sinai.

This is therefore one of the primary messages of Shavuos - striving to reach, once again, this pinnacle of accomplishment that we attained on this festival so long ago.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that this is unrelated to the giving of the Torah. To the contrary, this is one of the major purposes of the Torah. As the Rambam teaches us at the end of Hilchos Chanukah, the whole Torah was given to make peace in the world, as it says, "Deracheha darchei noam, v'chol nesivoseha shalom - Its ways are ways of pleasantness and all Its paths are paths of peace." This is an amazing concept. The Rambam is teaching us that a common thread running through all of the 613 mitzvahs is the golden thread of pursuing peace. Thus, it is no wonder that the sages did not let their disciples stand up for the scholarly Geniva for, although he was a great sage, he was a very controversial figure.

We too, whether Daf Yomi attendees, Yeshiva bochrim, or women who staunchly support the Torah of our families, must make sure we are in sync with the major thrust of Torah - namely the pursuit and maintenance of peace and tranquility.

To illustrate the theme of Torah being studied to foster shalom, let's take a look at an amazing Gemora. We are taught in Masechtas Sukkos that Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and his son Elazer had to seek refuge from the authorities for many years in a cave. A miracle occurred and a spring of water with a carob tree sustained them. They stayed there, deep in Torah learning, for over a decade. When they finally exited, their eyes consumed any mundane sight. At that point, Hashem commanded them to return into their cave. Harav Reuvain Feinstein, Shlit"a, queried if their assiduous Torah study had caused them such a lofty and rarefied holiness, would not their return for more Torah study even make them

more out of touch with this mundane world? How would it help for them to go back into the cave?

He explains that Hashem told them to go back into the cave and learn the Torah of shalom, the Torah of peace and tranquility. When they emerged one year later, they successfully accomplished this objective and, upon witnessing honor being given to Shabbos, they saw in this the fulfillment of the aura of Shabbos' special peace and tranquility.

The word achdus is a much misused and maligned term. It is amazing to me how people hurl it at others as an accusation. 'Why, THEY have no sense of achdus!' Or, with the banner of achdus unfurled as a defense for their own misbehavior or spiritual neglect, they fling an accusation of a lack of achdus upon those who properly rebuke them. In truth, the Torah teaches us that, at times, it is not only proper - but also incumbent upon us - to chastise others and even to distance ourselves from people who are tardy in their religiosity.

What, then, is true achdus?

I believe that achdus is primarily what we ourselves do. It is how we administer tolerance. It is how we reach out to others and - with much self-control - look away from those who belittle or insult us. This, our own actions, is the only way to promote real achdus. Others then will learn from our example - for this kind of behavior is truly infectious. In this way we can really make strides towards friendships and unity. I'd like to reiterate; if you are among those who primarily tout achdus to others, it's time for a little soul searching.

The Gemora teaches us that tzadikim, 'Nelavin v' einam olvim - They are insulted but do not answer back... and ...Shomim cherpason v' einam m'shivim - They hear words of disgrace but are silent.' At first glance, this sounds admirable, but there is an obvious question. Why shouldn't a righteous person rebuke insensitivity? What about his sense of tochacha, chastising the wrongdoer. If he stands meekly by, won't this just encourage insensitivity to others? Rather, the Gemora explains, tzadikim hold back and are silent from people who simply do not listen. Whether they are the types who are too rigid to change or too arrogant to be told anything, with such people the correct behavior is to look away.

This too is a great step in the direction of achdus. It is in the spirit of the famous Gemora that asks and then answers, "What is a person's profession in this world? To train yourself to be like a mute." Or another Gemora, "The world survives on the one who knows how to shut his mouth during a quarrel."

Whether in the arena of marital harmony, parental relationships, raising children; whether in the synagogue or in the workplace, these are lessons, the raison d'être, of the spirit of Torah. This pursuit of peace, steadfast and single minded, will serve us well and surely give us success in all our endeavors.

May Hashem bless us all with a very healthy, happy and wonderful Shavuos.

To receive a weekly cassette tape (\$20 monthly) or CD (\$26 monthly) directly from Rabbi Weiss, please send a check to Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss, P.O. Box 140726, Staten Island, NY 10314 or contact him at RMMWSI@aol.com. Attend Rabbi Weiss's weekly shiur at the Landau Shul, Avenue L and East 9th in Flatbush, Tuesday nights at 9:30 p.m. Rabbi Weiss's Daf Yomi shiur can be heard LIVE on Kol Haloshon at (718) 906-6400 beginning at approximately 8:15 p.m. and again at 10:25 p.m. (EDT) on Monday thru Thursday nights. Previous shiurim are also available. Kol Haloshon expanded its coverage to include toll free dialing in the Chicago area. The phone number there is 773.290.2355. In London, Kol Haloshon can be reached at (208) 150-6889. In Toronto, Kol Haloshon can be reached at (416) 907-8305. In Mexico City, Kol Haloshon can be reached at (52) 555 3512476.